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Ribaut and Bridaine.

# RABAUT AND BRIDAINE;

OR,

THE COURT OF LOUIS XV.

FROM THE FRENCH OF

L. L. F. BUNGENER,

AUTHOR OF "BOURDALOUE AND LOUIS XIV.," "LOUIS XV, AND HIS TIMES,"

AND "THE TOWER OF CONSTANCY."

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# IN THE CITY.

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## I.

### VARIOUS EFFECTS OF THE DISCOMFITURE.

The next day after the scene at Versailles, the bishop of Meaux was talking with his nephews in his study.

The conversation, as may be imagined, turned upon the occurrences of the previous day. The bishop and the abbé were profoundly cast down; the colonel consoled himself as was his custom, by an abundance of imprecations against all who had in any way contributed to his brother's misfortune,—against the missionary, the courtiers, the king, and against God. Fewer, perhaps, against God than the others, for he believed in him too little to imagine seriously that he was in any way concerned in such occurrences.

The abbé, in spite of his vices, had not been able to rid himself of another feeling. He had certainly not yet gone so far as to thank God for the lesson which he had received; but in spite of himself this lesson had made some impression on him. He vaguely perceived the emptiness and falseness of that eloquence which he had heretofore studied; he understood how far he was from being a Christian orator. But as he felt, on the other hand, that he had neither faith enough to be one, nor

ardor enough to endeavor to become one, he passively allowed himself to fall into a state of complete discouragement. The only person who could have given him a little hope, Madame de Pompadour, had refused to see him after the affair, and he knew that she had but little sympathy for those of her friends who were unfortunate or awkward. He had been very near sending in immediately his resignation of the post of preacher to the king, and would not have hesitated, had it not been for his uncle's petitions and his brother's fury.

And yet beneath all this fury, the marquis was filled with impressions far more profound than those indicated by the helpless discouragement of his brother. His mind, more impulsive, had been more deeply moved; the more hardened he had been, the more he had been shaken. Yet not so much shaken, that he could not still harden himself at least externally. He was vexed to find himself capable of feeling anything besides blind fury. He would have blushed to have it perceived; he blushed to perceive it himself. But some few good seed had fallen among the thorns of his heart, and they might spring up better there than in the dry soil of his brother's.

The bishop, a courtier more than anything else, regarded the whole as a court mishap. Bridaine's sermon appeared to him excellent; that of his nephew not less so. "All styles are good save the tiresome style," he said, with Boileau; and as the abbé's was, in fact, not a tiresome one, his uncle did not see why he should not have the right to preach as he thought best. "Come, come," he said to his nephew, "suppose this were a real failure, which I do not admit, what is to prevent your remedying it in a month. The king will be there, I will wager you. There will be a crowd, and you will be higher than ever."

The abbé shook his head.

“And to think,” cried his brother, “to think that all this has happened because the notion must seize Monsieur l’abbé to shut himself up one fine evening in the cathedral. As if he could not have done just as well in his chamber or in the chapel of the house! What the devil was he doing in—”

“In this galley!” said the bishop, who was acquainted with Molière, and never lost an opportunity of quoting him.

“In reality,” he continued, “it is more my fault than his. I sent after Father Bridaine, and it was I who brought this poor sermon forward.”

“No,” said the abbé, “I prefer to think that it was all the will of God.”

The bishop looked at him with surprise. The marquis burst into a laugh.

“Ha! ha! see, we are going to turn Trappist—‘the will of God!’ When are we going to don the cowl, brother Ange?—Poor sermon! It little expected to accomplish such a fine conversion! Let any one say now that the sermon is worth nothing!”

He laughed anew; but like one who strove to forget himself.

## II.

A ROUGH VISITOR.—NO ANSWER RECEIVED TO A PLAIN QUESTION.

It was announced to the bishop that some one desired to speak to him immediately.

“Who is it?” he asked.

“A gentleman who would not give his name.”

“Let him come in.”

“Ah, good morning!” cried the marquis, hastening to meet

the new comer. "You here! You, Diderot! you in a bishop's house! It is like the moon in a well. You think you see it, but it is not there. A shadow, a—"

"My dear friend, if there is any one a shade it is yourself. I met a man about a quarter of an hour from Paris, whom they were taking there to be hung, and that they told me for assassinating the marquis de Narniers."

"That abominable business again!" interrupted the bishop. "What, Henry, you have not had him set at liberty?"

"How could I when he was once taken? You know very well that there is a decree of the parliament of Toulouse—"

"And you will allow it to be executed?"

"Bah! we shall see. Well, Diderot, what pleasant wind blows you here?"

"A tempest."

"The deuce! You have at least left it outside of the door!"

"Yes.—And it shall depend upon Monseigneur whether I send it away, or make it come in."

"Sit down, Monsieur," said the prelate, "I have not for many years had the pleasure of seeing you."

"For nearly twenty, Monseigneur; and my visit to-day has reference to our business at that time."

The bishop did not appear particularly pleased to find his memory so good.

"Monseigneur," he continued, "you will be good enough to allow me to come immediately to the point. At the time when I wrote your mandates—"

"You wrote my uncle's mandates?" interrupted the marquis.

"Why yes— Did you not know it? Then I am sorry to have told it. But—"

“To the point, to the point,” said the bishop.

“At the time when I worked for you, Monseigneur, I worked also for others, for my pen, as you know, has always been at the service—of all trades—witness a very nice advertisement I lately wrote, of an oil to make the hair grow—”

“To the point, I beg, to the point !”

Diderot knew how to be brief, but he loved to torment, especially great people. For that matter the story of the oil was true. His style was marvellously well suited to *appeals* of all kinds, and he was frequently called upon to write them.

“I am coming to it,” he said. “Among my customers of those days was a certain Aubry, a priest of your diocese. I made him some sermons, and he went to preach them in America. So far so good. But here he has come back, and he is going to publish them, it is said.”

“Well ?”

“With the name of the author.”

“Then their success is certain,—an extravagant success—”

“Extravagant, perhaps, but at my expense. This I have no mind to endure.”

“How can you prevent it ?”

“I cannot, but I have the good fortune to know some one who *can*, and this some one will, I hope, be inclined—”

“Can you possibly mean me ?”

“Precisely. Aubry still belongs to your diocese, does he not ?”

“I do not even know where he is.”

“That shall be no hinderance to you. He is at Paris.”

“Well, what then ?”

“What then ? Why you will have the goodness to see that these sermons are not published.”

“You demand that in a tone—”



“Let us change it if necessary. Will Monseigneur have the extreme goodness to condescend to forbid the said Aubry—”

“Forbid?—Forbid? He is at Paris, you say.”

“Well, to have him forbidden then—”

“By Monsieur de Beaumont? We are such good friends!”

“So you refuse?”

“But—”

“Good. Adieu, Monseigneur.”

“Already?” said the marquis. “Will you not dine with us?”

“No, I have business. Since my religious works are to be published, I am at least determined that the collection shall be complete.”

“You say that you—?” cried the bishop.

“Monseigneur promises me an extravagant success; I wish to take advantage of it. Accordingly the collection shall be in two parts. In one my sermons; in the other my mandates—”\*

“You will not do that!”

“Why not?”

“It would be treacherous!”

“So is Aubry’s project,—and yet you will not prevent that—”

“The sermons are his—”

“Yes;—

“They say that the abbé Roquette  
Preaches sermons not his own,  
But I, who know that he bought them,  
Maintain they are *his* alone.

“In that sense, it is clear, that the mandates are yours.

\* The bishops of the Romish church publish annually at the approach of Lent, *mandates*, or pastoral letters, which are read by the vicars or curates throughout the diocese. [Tr.]



But I have no time to look so closely at the matter. So, for the last time, you refuse?"

"I do not say so—I will try—"

"Try. But I warn you beforehand that if you fail the mandates shall be made public. Do not shout about the indelicacy of the thing. A drowning man cannot stay to choose how he shall be saved. And I should consider myself drowned,—drowned in ridicule—if these sermons should be published."

"They regard neither law, nor gospel," murmured the bishop. "These infidels—"

"I beg your pardon, Monseigneur,—I did not hear exactly—"

"I said nothing."

"Oh yes, you did say something. Something like 'these infidels—'"

"Perhaps."

"And these infidels, who regard neither law nor gospel are—?"

"You know better than I, I fancy."

"Well, since I know them, shall I tell you something about who they are?"

"Let us hear."

"The infidels without regard for law or gospel, Monseigneur, are not those who do not believe, but those who pretend to believe; those who live, speak, reign, flourish, and persecute in the name of an idea or a thing at which they themselves would be the first to scoff, if they dared. The infidel's without faith or law are those—Listen."

He seated himself gravely in the arm chair which he had just quitted. "One day," he resumed, "in a city the name of which I will not mention, I chanced to enter a church. I had never beheld a more beautiful spectacle, and if to be a Christian it is only necessary to love music, perfumes, flowers,

and rich tapestry, I swear to you that for a quarter of an hour I was one. At the right of the altar under a canopy of velvet and gold, was throned a sort of god,—a man so gorgeously apparelled, so surrounded with homage, that this temple seemed his, and this altar, an altar to his glory. Yet I saw him kneel; then taking in his hands a golden urn in the centre of which appeared something white, he raised it above his head. All knees save mine were bent; all heads—”

“We are aware what high mass is,” said the bishop.

“Excuse him,” said the marquis. “He had doubtless never seen one.”

“Well,” he said, “I will be brief. In the midst of all this pomp, standing alone in my corner, in the midst of this sea of bowed heads, what calculation do you think I was making? All this,—I thought,—music, incense, lights, splendid vestments, honors paid to the principal personage, all this means—what? That a bit of bread is reckoned to be flesh, not bread. If he who presents this for the adoration of the faithful, believes firmly, sincerely, fully in the reality of the fact, I have nothing to say; if he does not believe in it, it is the most abominable comedy ever played in the world. Well, Monseigneur, do you, who were upon this throne, receiving this homage,—do you, whom I saw,—for it was yourself,—presenting the host for the adoration of the people,—do you believe in transubstantiation?”

And Diderot planted himself before the bishop, motionless, and arrogant as he knew how to be even when embarrassed, and as he was to a most superlative degree when he was embarrassing others.

Confounded, horrified, the bishop stared at him.

“By what right?—” he stammered. “By what right do you come to—to—”

“Yes, what right have you?” repeated the abbé.

“ Ah ! you too ! ” said the encyclopedist. “ Come, Monsieur le marquis, join the chorus. Ask me what right I have— ”

“ Yes, what right have you to come and trouble my uncle’s peace ? I suppose myself, that he has never seriously asked himself if he believed in transubstantiation. He saw every one believe in it—or appear to do so,—and so he did as every one else did.”

“ What ! ” said the bishop. “ I have not studied the subject ? Did I not publish— ? ”

He stopped short. Diderot smiled.

“ A mandate,—you would say ? I remember in fact that I wrote you one which treated of this subject. You furnished me with arguments, it is true ; but since I was able to develop them without believing a word of them, you must acknowledge that I may be allowed to think you might have given them to me without believing them any more. Come, Monseigneur, tell me conscientiously, and try to think this time that you speak neither to an encyclopedist, nor an infidel, nor an atheist, but simply to a man of sense, conscientiously tell me if when you are there, before the altar, the host in your hand, and three thousand persons kneeling before you, you are fully and perfectly convinced that you present to them a God ? ”

“ A God is everywhere. Why should he not also be in the host ? ”

“ Already a step back ! In this mandate, if I remember aright, you make me quote certain decrees of the council of Trent. There, as you well know, the material presence of Christ is taught with hopeless distinctness ; and any opinion tending to soften, to spiritualize this doctrine, is as much a heresy as that which would deny it. Accordingly there is no medium. It is not I, but the council of Trent and your old mandate, which repeat my question. Once more, Monseigneur, do you believe that

this bread,—although you cannot help perceiving it to possess after the consecration the same color, form and taste as before,—do you believe that it is changed to flesh? Do you really believe that the words which you pronounced, perhaps carelessly, can have the power to work such a miracle? Do you believe that this wine, which is still the same in taste and color, has become blood? Are you persuaded that a body once the size of yours and mine is entire in this host, in each fragment of this host? And finally, do you believe this body still entire, always the same, capable of existing in a hundred thousand places at once? Answer, me Monseigneur, answer me. Say yes, and I am silent. Here, looking at me, say yes, and I swear that I will believe you.”

“But—still—”

“I want *yes*—or *no*.”

“You want *no*! Do you dare to think—”

“Very well, say yes then—”

“Stop,” cried the abbé, “stop, I implore. My uncle is ill.”

And in fact the old man was in a state of terrible agitation. His face was crimson, and his lips and hands trembled. Diderot rose.

“We will say no more, then,” he observed. And the abbé heard him add to himself, “He did not say no,—but neither did he say yes.”

### III.

#### A DIFFICULT THING FOR ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS TO BELIEVE IN TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

Have not many priests, in the secret of their hearts, made the same half confession which an infidel thus roughly extorted from the conscience of a bishop :

When Luther,\* at that time a fervent Catholic, made his journey to Italy, nothing wounded him more deeply than to see the priests secretly laughing at the miracle which they publicly pretended to perform. "Bread thou art, and bread thou wilt remain," they said ironically, in a low voice, at the very altar, instead of the sacramental words.

And are there not still such priests? Do all believe, in the nineteenth century, that which many did not in the sixteenth? We know not, and it is not for us to examine. We will not even say, as some have said, that a priest *cannot* believe in the mass; we say only, (and we shall certainly be so far right,) that it is necessarily more difficult for him to believe than others, since he is obliged to see so closely, to touch, to taste all the impossibilities which crowd around it.

And ought he not to be terrified to find the very smallest doubt in his mind, when he observes the importance which his church attributes to this pretended miracle? The mass has become the summary, the centre, the most important part of worship, and in many respects the summary of religion itself. In like manner as Christ is declared to be incarnate in the host, is Christianity incarnate in the mass. The church does not say so; but in all its precepts and usages, in all it teaches and does, there is nothing which does not tend to nourish this error. The mass, always and everywhere the mass. The mass apropos to everything, the mass to gain every end. From Rome to the smallest hamlet, there is not a church where the building, as a whole, and in detail,—where every thing, in fact, does not proclaim the mass, is not made for the mass, does not exclude from the very first all other ideas save that of the mass.

\* What follows is partly taken from our "*History of the Council of Trent.*"

And all this, as Diderot said,—all this pomp, singing illumination, magic,—on account of what is it? A morsel of bread which is asserted to be not bread, but flesh; a miracle of such a nature, that those who have to teach it are precisely those who are in the most danger of disbelieving it.

## IV.

## THE TWO BROTHERS.—LIVES OF SAINTS.

The bishop had left the apartment. His nephews, after having accompanied him to his chamber, returned to the library; but Diderot was no longer there. He had left a note on the table, containing these words only:

“No sermons, or else look out for the mandates.”

“What a man!” said the abbé.

“You cut a sorry figure there,” said his brother.

“Can such a man be reasoned with?”

“Reason about transubstantiation! I should have liked to see you try it.”

“Why not?”

“Because it is a thing about which, so soon as you begin to reason, you are beaten.”

“You are no better than he.”

“And you no better than our uncle.”

“Well, I call this arranging one’s disputes in private! But, joking aside, do you know what I was most afraid of? I trembled lest while he was talking he should happen to glance at this book.”

“What is it?”

“You know very well. The Life of Saint Tryphon, by



Father Boidard, which has just been re-printed with my uncle's approbation; or rather with mine, for I gave it."

"Yes, I have some little recollection of the book. But why were you afraid he would see it?"

"Have you read it?"

"Are you jesting?"

"Well, my dear fellow, read it, for it will make you die of laughter. You will hear how Saint Tryphon, shortly after his birth, distinctly pronounced the names *Jesus* and *Mary*; how, when he was seven years old, his guardian angel appeared to him; how, at ten or twelve, when he went to his devotions, the fervor of his soul kept his body suspended six inches, a foot, two feet above the ground. You will learn a new method of corresponding with heaven. It is only necessary to write a letter to Jesus Christ or the Virgin, and to deposit it at night in the wooden hand of your patron saint. Before the next day, the letter arrives without fail at the end of its journey. You may even hope for an answer in writing; for Saint Tryphon had a number of these miraculous autographs. One day, he was taking bread to some poor people. He was accused by some wicked persons of having stolen it. He wished to defend himself. But God had already provided; the bread was changed in his hands into a bouquet of magnificent flowers. A hundred years after his death, he was disinterred, and found fresh colored and well preserved. Then at his tomb all sorts of miracles took place. The dead were raised by dozens, the lame cured by hundreds, the sick by thousands. In short,—but here, here,—take the book, and you will see if I am exaggerating."

"Oh, it is quite enough for me that the book does so. But you have there an hundred copies, I think."

"Two hundred."

“What are you going to do with them?”

“They will be distributed among country curés and convents.”

“Not to the women’s convents, I hope.”

“Why not?”

“Why not? Well, that will be fine! Have you not read this adventure which I chanced to light upon as I opened the book? Stay, listen. ‘One day, when the saint’—”

“I know, I know!”

“Why, Diderot and Crebillon\* never wrote anything viler!”

“My dear, you understand nothing of the matter. I tell you that our devotees will be greatly edified by it. The intention purifies everything.”

“You understand your subjects, gentlemen.”

“As if we had created them.”

“Do not say *as if*. You have created them entirely; and I will not compliment you upon them.”

“Blessed are the poor in spirit!”

“If, to make them blessed, you only require this sort of stuff, then give them plenty of it. For sooth to say, it cannot be difficult to manufacture. But since it is only for the poor in spirit, at least allow people of sense to laugh at it.”

“Do I forbid them to laugh?”

“Not you, it is true. Provided they do not laugh too loud, and, above all, not before the people whom you feed with these fine things, you willingly permit all to treat it as it deserves; and if perchance this scorn reflects upon religion itself, you will not concern yourself about that, provided, be it always understood, that appearances are preserved. I can understand how *you* can do all this, since you believe in nothing—”

\* The younger Crebillon, author of immoral romances; among others, “Les Amours de Zéokinisul, roi des Kofirans.” (Louis Kinze, roi des Frankois.



“ Oh!—”

“ In very little, certainly. But explain to me how the more pious priests can also make themselves the hawkers of this foolery. For surely, if they do believe more than you in the teachings of Christianity and the church, even in the bread turned to flesh, they cannot believe any more than you in this story of the bread changed into flowers, or the man suspended in the air by the fervor of his soul, or the letters come from heaven, or—”

“ Did not Saint Paul say that we should be *all things to all men* ?”

“ Saint Paul, my friend, according to the little I know of him, was, above all things, an honest man. I have heard you yourself preach on this famous *all things to all men*. You explained it by showing how skilful he was in gaining all hearts by his goodness, his charity, his—at any rate, you did not say, and I think you would have been at a loss to prove, that he ever made use of falsehoods in ever so small a quantity, in his method of winning men.”

“ Other times, other needs !”

“ Are there periods then when lying is permitted ? Upon my honor, brother, you make me play a singular part ! I fancied I was a famous miscreant, and here I am advocating morals ! I have often lied, it is true ; I have made vows of love and other vows, which I did not dream of keeping, and what is more, I have repented little of my pranks. But to say coolly that lying is allowable, to call it openly to the aid of a religion asserted to be true, and the only true one,—that is something of which I must confess, I feel myself incapable. I may have been a scapegrace, but I never could have been a priest.

## V.

## SAINTS.—MANUFACTURE OF SAINTS.

The abbé laughed. It appeared to him really very amusing to hear the marquis talking of morals; he did not go far enough to see how hideous the system must be which revolted even such a man. With what a cuirass does Catholicism surround the conscience of its subjects! For in our days, this cuirass has become thicker and firmer. Books like "Saint Tryphon of Meaux," if not worse, have been spread abroad in the last twenty years, by tens and hundreds of thousands, and among all the clergy, from the humblest vicar to the pope, there is not one heart which appears to be revolted, not one voice raised in protestation!

At last the marquis also laughed. He turned over the leaves of the book, and his eyes fell upon tales more and more absurd on every page. His levity as a libertine had calmed his gentlemanly indignation. This book was for him nothing more than a collection of fairy tales, and he found it, as such, extremely amusing.

And yet it was with a gesture of disgust, that he finally closed the volume, and threw it upon the table. As he had turned over the leaves, beginning at the close, he had at last arrived at the bishop's approbation. There, among the other praises, he had read:

"The charm of the narrative, and the interest of the episodes, with the orthodoxy and piety of the reflections, assure to this work the favorable results which the author had in view. We accordingly cannot but recommend it for the perusal of the faithful throughout our diocese."\*

\* It was nearly in these same terms that the archbishop of Paris, in

At the gesture which he made, the abbé asked,

“What is it now?”

“Nothing.”

“You certainly have a spite against this poor Father Boidard. They say he is a saint.”

“Yes, yes, of course. His life will undoubtedly be written also in a hundred years. He will be rewarded for the pains he has taken with Saint Tryphon. But what I just saw was not by him.”

“Ah! the approval? It is in fact rather strong, but the bookseller offered three hundred crowns, and—”

“These things pay, do they?”

“As a matter of course. The approval of the bishop secures the sale. Why should not a part of the profit go into the bishop’s pocket?”

“Very good. But the good Fathers also have their part, eh? As authors—”

“Ah! their part! It is not necessary that any one should trouble himself about that. They secure it themselves, and all the better because they seem not to be thinking of the matter. With their vow of poverty, they finger more money than we do; with their vow of obedience they are our masters.”

“So much the worse for you.”

“We must have them.”

“And why not abolish them?”

“Child! Are they *abolishable*, I should like to know? The parliament can do nothing with them, believe me, nor the pope either. The order dissolved, the individuals would remain; the individuals dead, the spirit would remain, since this spirit

1846, recommended the *Life of St. Kotska*, one of the most fabulous productions of Jesuit literature.

is, in fact, none other than that of the Church. We must have them, I tell you ; we shall always need them or others resembling them. They are somewhat expensive soldiers, sometimes a little mutinous, but they never shrink from anything. Command them to do something which does not suit them, and if you were the pope himself they would find some way of getting off,—but anything which suits their ideas, you can be sure that neither obstacles, dangers, nor anything in the world can prevent them from accomplishing. We recommend these miserable little books which are so serviceable to us among certain people, but we do not write them. A Jesuit is ready to dip his pen in anything you like ; ink or blood, gall or mire, no matter to him. Nothing too high, nothing too low for him. Have you some interest in communicating with a peasant ? Send a Jesuit to him. A king ? Still, send a Jesuit. The pope ? again, a Jesuit will serve you.”

“Apropos of the pope and the Jesuits, how comes on that affair of Saint— What do you call him ? Saint—”

“Eucharion. But do not call him saint. His diploma is not yet signed.”

“What a long delay ! You have been soliciting it three or four years.”

“Three or four years ! When I took up the affair it had been going on for more than twenty ! It might have lasted twenty more, if not longer ; but thanks to Father Pontcarlier—”

“Your agent at Rome, I suppose.”

“Yes, our factotum, for every bishop must have one, if he wishes to obtain anything from Rome without a ruinous expense. It is through him that I procure indulgences, dispensations, rosaries, and other articles which have received a bene-

diction; it was through him that I obtained for twenty-five livres the permission not to read my breviary.”\*

“You might have taken the permission.”

“I had taken it in fact, long before; but I thought that would be better, after all, to go according to rule. It gives one a certain air of austerity, of scrupulousness. When Bossuet was at court, or at Paris, and was obliged from his health to eat meat on fast days, he never failed to ask permission of the curé of Versailles, or of Saint-Roch. The better one obeys, the better he can command.”

“Well thought of. You were saying—?”

“That Father Pontcarlier has done wonders; but no money, no—saints. He has just now written me word that there is no more. Two or three hundred louis, he says, are still necessary.”

“And you will send them to him?”

“They are already on the road.”

“And where did you get them?”

“Out of the bishop’s strong box. But we are expecting soon to have a collection taken up, and in that case, we shall soon have the sum replaced.† You do not know what the acquisition of a saint is for a diocese!”

“And did Eucharion belong to this diocese?”

\* See a tariff of 1845, copied by a number of journals.

† Two collections of this kind recently took place in France, one at Toulouse, for the canonization of a young girl, *Germaine Cousin*, who died 1660, the other at Marseilles, for that of *Benoit Labre*, dead some sixty years. “To arrive at this result,” said the circular of the bishop of Marseilles, “a considerable outlay is necessary. The sum destined for the expense, is exhausted. I accordingly make an appeal to the generosity of the faithful of my diocese, in order that they may aid by their alms the continuation of a process truly interesting for France, which gave to the church the holy person whom we wish to place upon her altars.”

“He *lived* here at least, for his name is scarcely French. He was called *Gutgnad*, which means, in Germany, Good Grace. But ‘*Saint Gutgnad*’ would have sounded somewhat harsh; ‘*Sain. Good Grace*’ would have made people laugh, like that poor ‘*Alacoque*,’ whose suit is also commenced.\* Thanks to me, *Gutgnad* did as the learned men of the sixteenth century did; he translated his name into Greek; he became *Eucharion*, which sounds well even in verse. This alteration was not effected, however, without trouble. It was under the name of *Gutgnad* that our subject had obtained the first degree of sainthood, the title of *venerable*. ‘It was unprecedented,’ said the council of the Congregation of Rites, ‘for a saint to change his name in passing from the first degree to the others. Money banished the scruples. ‘In fact,’ wrote Pontcarlier, ‘a few ducats more would enable us to change, if you chose, not only the name, but the person.’ This would not be such an astonishing thing, moreover, as one might think. In our old chronicles I have discovered traces of four or five *Gutgnads*, whom tradition, it appears, has blended into one. Our future *Eucharion* is accordingly a certain creation of the reason, like *Hercules* of antiquity, formed from the quintessence of several others.† So much the worse for him. So far as we are concerned, it makes no difference, provided that the form is there, and that the people adore.”

“*Adore?* I heard you preach on the invocation of saints, and you proved, by a lengthy disquisition, that the church does

\* It is not yet completed. In 1788, it was about to conclude, thanks to the edifying efforts of the bishop of Autun, who was none other, it will be remembered, than Monsieur de Talleyrand. The Revolution took place, and the saint was forgotten. Gradually his cause was talked of again; and at the commencement of 1848, it was about to be taken up anew. Poor *Alacoque*! Poor people!

† Many of the most popular saints are in the same case.



not command that they should be adored; that it is a calumny to assert it."

"In fact, the church does not order it, and the heretics themselves do not pretend that she does; but we are obliged to take for granted that they do pretend it, else what should we have to answer them? We know as well as they do, and better, that all these fine distinctions between *invoke* and *adore* do not hold good in practice. There are but few persons, it is evident, whose devotion to the saints is not a real adoration; few people, very few, incontestibly, who confine themselves to invoking them as intercessors, and who do not pray to them, in reality, as to the Deity. But if these people like to do so, and if, moreover, it is a salutary restraint, why should we trouble ourselves about it?"

"Very good. But what, then, is the meaning of this reply to the heretics: 'We do not command the worship of the saints?' You do not command it,—no; but you place them upon the altar, knowing perfectly well that they will be worshipped."

"Monsieur brother, I did not know that you were so good a logician."

"Monsieur brother, I did not believe you to be so Jesuitical."

"Good! the great word slips out! But, my dear friend, who is not a Jesuit in this world? Many are so for the perdition of souls; why should not we be so for their salvation?"

"Do you think of the salvation of souls,—*you?* Is it for the salvation of souls that you are going to have Gutgnad canonized,—Gutgnad the triple or quadruple,—Gutgnad, who, in fact, never existed,—for you confess yourself that he is a combination of I know not how many monks? Which, pray, of the three or four will receive the petitions?"

"The people will pay; that is sufficient for them. They will pay; that is enough for us."

"I may say now the great word is out! Why did you not begin with that?"

"Because I was relating a story, and did not expect to meet with such a caviller."

"Well, finish your story, then."

"Without further difficulties we arrived at the second canonical degree, the title of *blessed*. But the greatest obstacle was yet to be surmounted. It is indispensable at Rome that a saint should have performed miracles, either during his life, or after his death. The Congregation of Rites exacts that these miracles shall be proved; *proved*, you understand how,—that is to say, they may be perfectly false and absurd, provided that the responsibility of the pope be protected. It is, at the same time, the best way of making the suit last, without appearing to have any motive but a religious conviction. It is sometimes years before some miracle can be hunted up which is wanting to the prescribed number. More than one candidate for saintship has beheld himself condemned to remain forever only *venerable* or *blessed*.

"If we have this misfortune, it will be from an excess of good things. Four or five miracles are enough, and we have more than thirty, each more astonishing than the others, all so prodigious that we dare not quote them. Where, moreover, are the proofs to come from? The chronicler was awkward enough to put here and there, '*It is said:*' his testimonials, in consequence, are desperately feeble. I admire Pontcarlier's skill in this. In the first place,—laying aside the miracles which may be taken up later, when the life of the new saint is written for the people, but which are decidedly too marvellous not to destroy entirely the credibility of the others,—he only cites five or six of the least extraordinary, those which the chronicler thought fit to assert without hesitation.



Then, from some documents of the same period, he has brought to light a few words which seem to confirm these ; and out of all this he has manufactured us a memorial, to which, doubtless, for form's sake, a few little objections may be made, but which will finish the affair. Cardinal Braschi informs my unele that all is going on well—*sano ma piano*,\* he says, which signifies that we may have yet to wait a year or two. Accordingly, to inspire us with patience, the pope has sent us some portions—”

“Of the true cross?”

“Of the bones of Saint Juventia, recently discovered in Rome, and which, it appears, are the rage. A volume is to be written, containing the miracles of all kinds which they have already performed.”

“It is a superb present, then!”

“There is a fragment of the skull, a finger, a rib, two teeth, and several hairs.”

“Mere scraps! What can you do with such things?”

“You shall see.”

“And this—Juventia, who was she?”

“Between ourselves I am very much afraid she is a baptized saint.”

“Well, would you rather have had her a heathen or a jewess?”

“Profane man, you understand nothing about it. We call *baptized* saints those to whom the pope has given a name because their own could not be discovered. Do you understand now?”

“Yes,—I understand now—less than before. How can it be certain whether these people whose names are not known, are saints at all?”

\* Well, although slowly.

"It is known where the early Christians buried their martyrs. Accordingly, all the bones found there are presumed to be—"

"I see. But you will say I am still more profane. Even if it should be certain that these were the remains of martyrs, is it certain that all martyrs were saints?"

"But, my dear friend, you question me as if I had began by saying that I look upon all this as very fine, very wise. Once more,—I am only relating it to you. If you find it tiresome, tell me so."

"Well,—go on."

"They go, then, from time to time, to the ancient burial places in the catacombs, in order to procure a new supply of saints. Formerly they only rummaged in the tombs which bore certain emblems said to be those of martyrdom; but they have not been so particular of late. The bones are taken out and cleaned, and then they are ready to be sent where it is judged most proper. Demands for them are numerous. Nothing, as you see, need prevent the satisfaction of all these demands, but the pious merchandise would soon have lost its value. It is consequently a signal favor that we have received these few bones, baptized with a name become celebrated from its miracles. I had my choice between these fragments, and a skeleton entire, but without reputation. I hesitated. This skeleton might become that of a great saint; but—"

"What! *Become?*"

"Yes, it has been known to happen. When one has the bones then the story may be constructed; the pope asks nothing better than to see the fructification of what he has planted. Monsieur Basquiat de la House managed well with some he had. He owned a small estate in Gaseony, which produced a wine, which no one would buy. Do you know what he did? Being at Rome, as secretary of an embassy, he

had one of these bodies presented to him, and christened by a name venerated in his part of the country. The peasants received it with great pomp. A fete was appointed,—then a fair. And the wine sold well.”

“Very good; but it seems to me, that the more taste I had for the worship of saints and their relics, the more I should shudder at the idea of such a mistake.”

“Not at all; you would do like the others. It is now two years since my *Juventia* has been invoked in Italy. Who has dreamed of such a thing as questioning the authenticity of her remains? Free thinkers care too little about the matter to speak of it, and the opposite party are too prejudiced to trouble themselves. Not that there have not been revelations and discoveries from time to time, with which we could well dispense. Father Mabillon, among others, brought forward extraordinary facts.\* It appears that it was not found worth the trouble even to read attentively the inscriptions on the tombs to be opened. A certain man, honored as a martyr, was afterwards found to have died quietly in his bed, and to have left, according to custom, an inconsolable widow. A certain virgin martyr, as for instance *Argyride*, honored at *Ravenna*, was found to have been entombed by the hands of an inconsolable husband.”

“And *Juventia*,” said the marquis. “Suppose anything of the kind were to happen to her?”

“Be easy in regard to that. They do not go so heedlessly to work now. In the place where her bones were found, there was no inscription whatever; but in a neighboring wall, a crumbling stone still bore some half-effaced letters, from which they made *Juventia*. *Juventia*, according to tradition, was a

\* See his famous *Letter from Eusebius the Roman, to Theophilus the Frenchman.*”

young Roman maiden, who was persecuted by a pagan father in order to force her to abjure Christianity. He finally stabbed her. The story was too dramatic not to be seized and made use of. It was boldly asserted that the relics found were those of a young girl; the miracles soon followed. To make all sure, the inscription has disappeared. So behold Juventia in full possession of her title and honors! More than twenty cities have her relics already. Magnificent shrines have received her smallest remains. I have done still better. I have contrived—  
But come. I will show you what it is.”

“Come.”

“I forewarn you that you will see nothing but the two teeth and the hair.”

“But—”

“Come in.”

## VI.

### SAINT JUVENTIA.

In the midst of the apartment, upon a Roman couch, was extended the form of a woman. Her face was not visible from the door, being slightly turned towards the window; only her hair was seen, falling in elegant disorder over a white neck and a velvet cushion. A white robe, bordered with purple, allowed the display of one foot, an arm, and a part of the bosom. On the breast above the heart was a small but deep wound, from which escaped a few drops of blood. The robe was stained with it, and the couch also appeared saturated.

“Well,” said the abbé, “are you satisfied? There, I fancy, is a relic the like of which is not often seen!”

The marquis stood confounded.

"But this is a jest," he said, "will you place that in a church?"

"Why not?"

"If an exhibitor of wax figures, should dare to make such an one, he would be forbidden to exhibit it."

"And with justice; but with us it is another thing. What, after all, is our object? We wish to render the history of a martyr a little more effective."

"An imaginary martyr."

"Imaginary perhaps, but what matters that? The moral effect will be produced."

"*Moral*—ah! And those in whom this interesting victim might only awaken sentiments—"

"Of which they may relieve themselves at confession. But tell me, is not the idea, in itself, one of the most ingenious?"

"You see that I am admiring it."

"Moreover, it is another invention of Pontcarlier. He even spoke of it to cardinal Braschi, who thought it excellent. Heaven knows how many saints will be thus remodelled! The smallest fragment of bone to insert—"

"What! the bones are in there?"

"Undoubtedly. Do you not understand? The piece of skull is here, beneath the forehead. Here is the hair. There are in all nine hairs."

"They are red."

"Yes. I shall have them dyed, in order that they may not contrast too much with the others. This finger ornamented with the ring is the one in which we put the finger bone."

"This hand is admirably well done."

"Is it not?"

"Where did you find a workman?"

"It is another of our dear Fathers. They do a little of everything, as you know."

"I did not know that they modelled in wax."

"They have cast cannons for the emperor of China."

"That is true. And the rib, where is it?"

"There, underneath the wound.—You can distinguish it.—  
Look—"

"I think I see it—but what color is it?"

"It has been painted rose-color. This was necessary, since the wound is supposed to be fresh. As for the teeth, here they are,—here—under the lower lip. Come to this side and you will see them."

The marquis went on the other side of the couch, but when he was opposite to the face of the figure he burst into a laugh, and began to clap his hands.

"That is it!" he cried, "that is it! There was never a better likeness."

"At last!" said the abbé. "You recognize her? It is a good thing."

"She consented to sit?"

"Yes; but she did not know what it was for. I only told her afterwards."

"And then?"

"She called me idolatrous, impious."

"True,—it is rather strong. To put upon the altar in the cathedral of Meaux the effigy of one's mistress."

"Pooh! my dear, three-fourths of the Italian madonnas, which we copy so untiringly, were the mistresses of the painters. Raphael never saw the Virgin any more than I have seen Juventia. If the Fornarina is adored in Italy, Madeline may be adored in France."

"A heretic!"

"A Jupiter at Rome was metamorphised into a Saint Peter."



“Very good. But to sum up the matter. A legend, a few bones, with a little wax over them,—and you have the object before which your people are to be called to prostrate themselves. I confess that I do not see very plainly in what our most holy Church differs from the pagans. Between a divinity constructed from such materials, and one boldly made out of nothing, where is the difference?”

“And where is the necessity that there should be a difference? Christian or pagan, man is the same. For six thousand years he has constantly demanded,—like the Jews from Aaron,—‘gods to go before his face.’ Well, here are the gods! If we wish to be followed, we must certainly appear to follow the people. What is the matter? You look at me with an air—”

## VII.

### THE MARQUIS REFLECTS.

And in truth the abbé remarked a gravity upon the features of his brother which was far from being habitual. In spite of his relapses into mirth, as for instance, when he had first seen the face of the saint, he appeared to be thoughtful. The cynicism of the priest revolted the heart of the libertine; his soul, benumbed by vice, was aroused to indignation by contact with this other soul so degraded by hypocrisy. It was indeed the first time that he had sounded the abbé’s ideas in regard to religion and worship with any attention. Until now he had been satisfied to look upon his brother, if not as a believer, as a man following his profession; he had not imagined him coolly giving an account of the frauds of which he was the instrument.

The discoveries accordingly produced a singular effect upon

him. If he had been a believer he would perhaps have become sceptical; being an infidel, although he did not become a believer, he began to feel that *this* could not be Christianity, that religion, in itself, had nothing in common with these turpitudes, and that he had perhaps been wrong in not seeking to know more about it.

This last feeling was however still too vague for him to venture upon its expression, especially to a man so little able to comprehend it.

"I have always fancied," he said, "that I had no great opinion of human nature. It appears that the priests respect it even less."

"Because they know it better."

"But why then are there so many fine discourses about the dignity of man, on the excellence of his faculties and his nature?"

"Because we absolutely must have grand words to conceal little expedients. Two ways were open to us; either to raise man to the level of Christianity, or to lower Christianity to the level of man. The second was the shortest and the most certain. We chose it; and you see," he added, casting a complacent look at the new deity, "that we have had no small success."

"No more of that;" said the marquis. "Enough and too much about this image. What is the original about?"

"The original is more intractable than ever. She heard, I do not know how, of the arrest of her Bruyn. After having cursed him so bitterly she still loves him. As long as this man lives, the whole thing will constantly have to be recommenced. Happily he—"

"You are mistaken. This man shall not die. The injustice of it begins to weigh—"



“ You are going to save him ?”

“ Yes.”

“ After having him arrested not a week ago ?”

“ Yes.”

“ You are losing your head.”

“ Perhaps so,—but I am regaining my heart.”

## VIII.

### THE CEVENOL IN PRISON.

While the iniquities of his Church prepared the marquis to repent of his own, his victim, the unhappy Cevenol, proceeded sadly towards Paris between two horsemen of the royal patrol. They had contented themselves, at Meaux, with ascertaining his identity, and he had been sent, as condemned by the parliament of Toulouse, to the prisons of the parliament of Paris.

Not having been able to induce his companions to name the author of his arrest, he remained convinced that it must be Bridaine. This thought oppressed him more than the recollection of all his ills, and more even than the expectation of the torture. So much baseness beneath such compassion, so much dissimulation beneath such frankness, appeared to him, not without justice, to denote the last possible extreme of human wickedness.

When he found himself alone, chained, upon a little straw in one of the damp cells of the Conciergerie, he was surprised to feel himself calmer. This cell was the haven. His adventurous nature took a sort of pleasure in abandoning itself without a struggle, without even a regret, to the grasp of an inexorable fate.

But his was not a nature to remain long in repose. This very tranquillity was to become the cause of torment.

In his perpetual impulse to turn his thoughts within, he had involuntarily begun to ask himself why he was so calm, and had felt that he was less resigned than impassible, less submissive than exhausted. He had been forced to confess to himself that the thought of God had little to do with this peace which had been restored to him.

Then came bitter returning thoughts of his musings and his peace of other days. What a difference between the present and that period when his life was a perpetual offering, when God was his all, when his earliest and latest feeling in all things was to seek and find all in God! He is to die, but stiffening himself against the terrors of death, and not soothing them by holy hopes. He will give up his life without regret, but he no longer has the feelings which would render it an acceptable sacrifice to God. He feels that before everything he ought to pardon him who betrayed him; but he cannot do so, and he is full of horror at the idea of dying with hatred in his heart. Then he too has been a traitor. He has heard himself called *Judas*, and this voice still vibrates in his ears. If he do not receive pardon,—and where shall he go to seek it—he will hear this voice even upon the scaffold,—until he reach the judgment-seat of God.

## IX.

### A VISITOR.—THE CEVENOL'S HISTORY CONTINUED.

Two days after his arrival in Paris, he was seated in the same spot, motionless and broken,—still wearing out his heart by this struggle without result, and without end.

A sound made him raise his head. His eyes suddenly kindled, his hands were clenched; and the word *Judas*, which weighed upon his heart, fell from his lips, which, though he smiled terribly, were compressed with anger.

The door had opened, and the prisoner had recognized Bridaine.

“Well, my poor friend,” said the priest,—but he stopped short.

He had not distinctly heard the exclamation of the Cevenol, and it was not until he came close to him in the lightest part of the cell that he perceived his countenance.

“But what is the matter?” he resumed. “Dost thou not know me? It is I.”

Bruyn’s glance grew softer beneath the benevolent eye of the priest. A thought—a sudden light—darted through his mind.

“If he should not be the one!” he said to himself.

Bridaine had understood at last. He was astonished that it had not occurred to him what suspicions the prisoner might have had of him. The less a man has dreamed of being a traitor, the less also he dreams of taking any pains to appear as if he had not. But he understood, at the same time, it was no longer necessary he should clear himself. He shook his head with a smile, and put his hand on Bruyn’s shoulder, repeating, “My poor friend!” Then he silently went and took his place opposite him upon the stone seat which surrounded the prison.

“It was not you,—God be praised!” said the Cevenol. “Who, then, was it?”

And a gloomy rage again filled his mind.

But without allowing the priest time to answer, he again cried:

“No! I do not wish to know. Wretch that I am! I was

lamenting a moment since that I had some one to curse in dying. God has relieved me of this burden—and I am asking that it should be restored to me! No! do not answer.”

“I should not have answered,” said the missionary. “Calm thyself.”

“But why have you left me so long in this error, which was a perfect torture? When I discovered your name—”

“My name! Dost thou know my name? Who told thee?”

“And the letter?”

“What letter?”

“The bishop’s letter. The one which you left on the table.”

“Ah! I remember.”

“Do you comprehend now? I beheld myself betrayed by him of whom I had spoken, without knowing him, as the only man in his church in whom I could confide!”

“Listen. Since that time I have not lost sight of thee. If they had not brought thee here, I would have returned to Meaux to see thee. But, first of all, answer me. Didst thou, or didst thou not, commit the crime for which thou hast been condemned?”

“I did not.”

“God hears thee.”

“I know it.”

“Repeat to me that thou art innocent.”

“I am innocent,—of this crime, at least.”

“Well,—finish thy history now.”

“What! could you save me?”

“Did I say I could?”

“You will try?”

“Perhaps.”

“O God!”

And he burst into tears. The terror of death seized him

again, with the hope of living. But he still struggled. He was indignant to feel himself moved.

“Another humiliation!” he murmured.

“A suggestion of pride!” said Bridaine, severely. “Wouldst thou remain immovable where thy master and mine shrank back? When he prayed to God that the cup might be taken away from him, dost thou wish it to be said that thou couldst drink thine unhesitatingly? But come; I asked thee to relate the rest of thy story.”

“I will try. Where was I?”

“At the sermon at Nîmes. Thou hadst made confession to a priest,—to me. I had listened with indignation to the manœuvres by which they had made thee a Catholic. I had given thee, not absolution,—for it appeared to me thou couldst not believe in that,—but my benediction.”

“I remember. What good it did me! But I was not worthy of it. My soul, like accursed ground, could for a long time only bring forth the fruits of shame and death.

“Thus I had at last submitted to all requirements; I had disgraced myself in the eyes of my brethren by my abjuration, and dishonored myself in my own by the public profession of a worship which I despised.

“I awaited my reward; my reward came not. It had been agreed that Madeleine should be restored to me, and every day came new pretexts for deferring this. They told me that she was so happy in her convent, that she wished to delay leaving it as long as possible, until all should be ready for our union. My love became irritated by these interminable delays. I began to suspect that the opposition came from her side. I trembled lest some new baseness, of which they dared not yet speak to me, should be the price for which they had resolved to restore her to me.

“My apprehensions caused me to meet half way the overtures which they were awaiting an opportunity of making. I went to see Father Charnay. I fell into a passion, but he was not the man to be insulted when he was certain of gaining in the end. He heard me quietly until I had finished; and when I cried, ‘What more do you want? Have I not yet done enough!’

“‘My dear son,’ he said, ‘a man cannot do too much to ensure his salvation. You are, God be praised, a Catholic; but who can be so sincerely without wishing that all should become so? The greatest obstacle to our preaching in the provinces is Rabaut the minister. Help us to get rid of him.’

“I thought that I must spring upon him. Betray Rabaut! I! Apostate as I was, I would rather have been cut to pieces in his defence. Charnay did not insist. He had thrown the dart. He doubtless concluded that he had only to let the poison work.

“And the poison was indeed about to work.

“I was perishing of shame, impatience and weariness. Friends and relations had all withdrawn from me. The Catholic leaders granted me only a cold and contemptuous protection. I began to believe there was no more hope,—that the only being in the world who, as I thought, was still disposed to love me, and to share my disgrace, would never be restored to me.

“Accordingly I returned, in spite of myself, to my last conversation with Father Charnay. The price which he had set upon the release of Madeleine still appeared to me, as at first, an infamy the idea of which it was not even necessary that I should repulse, so impossible was it, I thought, that it should ever enter my head to carry it out; but I was startled to find myself wishing that the imposed condition had been a little



less unacceptable, a little less monstrous. I familiarized myself with the idea of another blow to my conscience, provided it were not too scandalous; and like an animal tied, which gradually lengthens its tether, I gradually enlarged the bounds within which I should dare to be criminal.

“I went again to the Jesuit. Why did I do so? I did not explain it to myself; I obeyed I know not what infernal instinct.

“In spite of my transports of rage, he perceived the progress which I had made. He repeated his demand, but this time positively and coldly. I must betray Rabaut or never again see Madeleine. There was, he said, no medium.

“I fled, cursing him. But it was no longer solely from horror of the crime; it was also and chiefly because I began to waver! The struggle, however, was still to be obstinate and painful. The expiation began before the crime; remorse itself is almost a feeling of peace when compared with the torments of a soul which foresees remorse and is terrified at it, and which hastens to meet it. Twenty times these anticipated tortures were on the point of recalling me to myself, to my former days; twenty times, after having by these convulsive struggles exhausted the little strength which remained me, I again fell powerless into the current which hurried me on.

“At length I thought I had found a means of escape. You will remember that I had only become a Catholic by first becoming an infidel. Your sermon at Nîmes had reconciled me with the faith; but the little good seed which had then fallen into my heart, had long since been swept away by these internal storms.

“Accordingly suicide appeared to me no great crime. It would spare me one of which I had the greater horror, because I beheld myself ready to commit it. Besides, it was in my eyes

a reparation, as it were, to be made for the tears of my former brethren. They would blame the method, but they would have the sad satisfaction of seeing that away from them I had only found despair and ruin.

“Accordingly one day, decided that it should be the last of my existence, I wandered from early morning upon the banks of the Gard, and strangely enough, in the intense emotions of a last day of life, I found a not unpleasing nourishment. I returned, in thought, to my pilgrimages of other days, when I went into our deserts to offer up my life to God. In vain did my conscience attempt to point out to me the abyss which existed between a sacrifice and a crime. The resemblance of the emotion in my eyes almost effaced the diversity of the circumstances. I wished to *taste* death; I deferred the moment, not from fear, but on the contrary, precisely because I felt no terror, and because I was certain of being quite as ready later as now. I decided at length, that at the moment when the sun should disappear behind the mountain I would step by step enter the river whose waves shortly after should sweep away my body.

“There remained about an hour for me to live. I seated myself upon a rock. The Gard foamed at my feet. The breeze fanned me with all the perfumes of the shore, and brought me all the murmurs of the evening hour. Behind me were some olives and pines, from which the birds saluted the setting sun; before me, solitary, brilliant, and already seeming larger from its approach to the horizon, the orb which carried with it my life.

“The shadows lengthened. Those of the opposite bank already took possession of the bed of the river. From moment to moment the waters flowed more darkly. It was my tomb which was making ready,—and some scattered shadows, al-



ready ascending the rock upon which I was seated, warned me that it was time to descend.

“I arose. As I stood, I was still beyond the boundaries of twilight; the sun granted me a last respite. My dazzled eyes were fixed upon it, but if I had possessed the power to regulate its movements, I would neither have hastened nor retarded its progress. It was necessary, in order to dissipate my last scruples, to abdicate all will. It was no longer I who wished to die; it was the sun who commanded me not to survive him.

“At length the summit of the mountain severed the disk of the orb. The sentence was pronounced, I bowed my head and descended. The pebbles rolled from beneath my feet. My dim vision followed them mechanically to the river, as it now followed the sun to the horizon. Did not they also point out my path? What could I do better than to give myself up, body and soul, to everything which might spare me the trouble and the crime of volition.

“Already my feet had touched the water—and now up to my knees in the river, I only awaited the last adieu of the sun from the mountain, in order to abandon myself to the current.

“But suddenly I raised myself—I uttered a cry—I recoiled. There, opposite to me, upon the bank, where the brilliancy of the sun had until now prevented me from distinguishing any object,—I perceived a man who stood looking at me, immovable, his arms folded. And in this man, I recognized Rabaut.

“How long had he been looking at me? I knew not. His presence in this spot was, moreover, nothing extraordinary. Forced to avoid the thoroughfares, he was most often to be met in the loneliest paths. But since my apostacy I had not

seen him. Although I had met so many other angry or sorrowful glances without shrinking, my most constant apprehension had been that of encountering his; and among the miseries from which I wished to free myself, this had occurred to me this very day, more importunate, more poignant than ever.

“My strength was at an end. This interminable day had exhausted the inmost springs of my being. I had only reserved for the last, the courage to die; where could I find that to live another moment? I felt the ardor which had supported me during a night without sleep, and a day without food, suddenly fail. My knees tottered. I sank upon the sand. A few vague emotions of terror passed through my mind. Then, nothing more.

“When I came to myself I was lying upon a bed. I heard voices speaking softly. Upon my making a movement a man who sat beside me rose. But my eyes were again closed, for I thought I recognized him whose presence had annihilated me on the banks of the Gard. The man spoke.—It was another voice.—It was that of Father Charnay!

“He informed me that I was at Nîmes; but he did not add that I was in one of the houses of his order. I had been found upon the highway at a short distance from Gard. It had been perceived, from certain indications, that I had been carried there. By whom? I guessed easily enough. Charnay was impatient to know, but I was silent. I had been received in a village. Charnay was in the neighborhood, and it was he who had me taken to the city.

“He never left me; he overwhelmed me with care, and proofs of interest. I knew him too well not to tremble at his kindness. He never approached me without my imagining that he was going to demand payment for it. And could I doubt that this payment was still the same?

“He introduced the subject at length, but so gradually, that I had worn out, with my continual apprehensions, all the courage and strength which I had regained. I was besides weakened by fever. My nights and days were divided between torturing sleeplessness and overpowering langour, and in the intervals, the faculties which remained were almost useless. The way was prepared for those terrors from which the tempter may expect complete success.

“He commenced by himself appearing full of alarm. He feigned suddenly to become aware of the infidelity by which he had permitted me to be brought into his church, and to shudder at it. I perceived him look at me with an expression of anguish; I heard him murmur aside, the words; ‘Lost! Damned!’ One day when I awoke, an immense black crucifix was before my eyes, and instead of teaching me to hope in the mercy of Christ, all the tortures of hell were described to me with horrible deliberation. This crucifix, the emblem of salvation, became to me only an emblem of damnation. The night came, and these terrific ideas were mingled with my usual delirium. I felt myself in the midst of the flames; I heard the cries of the damned. Phantoms came and went before my eyes; the Christ, motionless upon his sable cross, looked at me with flaming eyes. Was this but an illusion of the senses? When, long afterwards, I recalled all the circumstances of these terrible nights, I felt convinced that fraud had been used. I have seen more than one Protestant converted in your convents by means of this kind. Why should there be any scruples in regard to using them against us, when recourse has been had to them so often in these institutions, against Catholics themselves, in order to wrest from their excited imaginations, vows which could not be gained from their heart or their reason?

“But it was my conscience which it was necessary to conquer. I must be brought to look upon something which I had hitherto regarded as a crime,—as a meritorious action. My attempt to commit suicide,—the confession of which Charnay had succeeded in drawing from me,—served his purposes wonderfully well. ‘A great expiation,’ he said ‘could alone cleanse me from this crime. Ought I not to count myself happy to be able to profit the Church, at the same time that I atoned for so great an offence against God?’ As for the Church, I never believed in it; in God I scarcely believed;—and I abhorred the man who was speaking to me. And yet,—I listened to him, and learned to give myself up to him. I had ceased to will, and in some sort to live; I mechanically sought some one who might think, act, live for me.

“Must I go on? His perseverance conquered. In order to expiate one crime I consented to commit another.

“Accordingly, scarcely convalescent, given up like a corpse into the hands of my pitiless master, I began to seek the means of satisfying him.

“Treachery was rare in our provinces. It was an almost unheard-of thing that a converted Protestant should betray his former brethren. I had, therefore, no difficulty in discovering the time and place of an expected meeting at which Rabaut was to preside.

“It was in one of our *deserts* the most deserving of this name. I knew the place for meetings had often been held there; it was found so convenient that it had been called *the temple*. Five or six paths led to a little plain quite surrounded by rocks, from whose summits our sentinels could see the country for the distance of a league. The outlets were numerous. It would have required at least ten thousand men to surround us with any hope of success.

“It was not accordingly in the place itself that it was deemed possible to capture the minister. But I knew the path by which he generally arrived; I had many a time been his companion in it. This path, winding among the rocks, seemed made for an ambush.

“It was necessary to conduct the soldiers thither. This was not easy, for it would have been sufficient to give the alarm to the whole neighborhood had only one been seen, even within a league of the spot. I led them two by two to the place, disguised as peasants. In ten nights and ten journeys there were twenty lodged in a tolerably large cave which opened a few steps from the pathway. The colonel was among the number. He was not willing to yield to any other the glory and pleasure which he promised himself from this expedition.

“I believed my task finished, but after the last journey I was desired to remain. The soldiers did not know the minister; I was to point him out to them. I implored in vain to be spared this hateful task. I endeavored to escape, but I was prevented and kept in sight.

“There were still two days before the assembly. How long they were! From time to time I succeeded in killing thought, but only to be roused again in a short time under the weight of a terrible anguish. When I remembered that I was there,—I, formerly the example and hope of my poor brethren,—to send their head to the scaffold,—I repulsed the horrible idea each time as one repels a dream. It seemed to me that the dream must at last have an end, and that I should at length know myself once more. Yes, I at length recognized myself,—but only to be inspired with a greater horror than ever! When through this grating I shall perceive the first beams of my last day, it will terrify me less than did among those rocks the dawn of the day which was to behold my crime accomplished.



“The arrangements were made. Several soldiers concealed twenty paces higher up were to close the passage at a given signal. At the same moment those in the cave were to come out, and the minister would be taken by the two parties. They had granted me permission not to make my appearance. The soldiers once out of the cave, I could slip forth, descend the pathway and fly.

“My tortures had already commenced. Looking through a crevice of the rock, I saw passing within ten paces of me, all those with whom in other days I had traversed this same path. Men, women, children, old men succeeded each other in groups, upon the rugged descent of the rock. Few spoke. The greater number were grave and thoughtful. A peacefulness, with which I bitterly compared my wretchedness, was visible upon these countenances embrowned by the fierce sun of Languedoc.

“An old man who had been hidden from me until then by other persons, stopped to take breath. It was my father! He took off his hat and wiped his brow. How much older he had grown! How plainly was my history to be read in his furrowed countenance! I followed with my eyes for a long time those gray hairs of which I was to be the disgrace. He had disappeared and I was still gazing after him.

“I felt my arm touched. ‘Is that he?’ asked the soldiers hurriedly. I looked. ‘No!’ I replied. But it was in fact one of our ministers, Paul Vincent. The soldiers stamped their feet; their chief himself evidently had a struggle before he could let such a prey escape. When, however, an instant afterwards they perceived two others, two together, ‘Is this he? which of them is it?’ they asked, almost aloud; and I thought that they would spring out of the cave without even allowing the pastors time to draw near. ‘No,’ I said, ‘neither

of them They were the pastors Encontre and Guizot, the two names, after Rabaut's, most known and venerated in the province.

"I scarcely breathed. Three already! The next must be Rabaut,—for it was rare for more than four to be present at an assembly, and there were more frequently only one or two. Three already! Suppose he should not come? Suppose he should at least come by another path? But no. I felt that I was to empty the cup to the dregs. It should have seemed almost an injustice, if after having been able to consent to the crime, I had not been condemned to accomplish it.

"But it pleased God still to delay the moment. I was not yet sufficiently crushed; I had not yet enough tasted my infamy.

"A woman drew near. She walked with difficulty; but it seemed as if she regained courage as she approached these mountains where she came to seek God. This woman was my mother.

"She passed on. The moment drew near. A few of the brethren who had been detained, and a few trembling old men, were still passing by. The soldiers murmured; the chief grew enraged. I almost began to hope.

"After some moments of silence and solitude, we again heard steps. I looked. A terrible rushing sound filled my head; a hand of iron seemed to compress my brow.

"I had not seen him, but I was about to see him. Four young men, with watchful eyes, advanced cautiously. It was his guard on these important occasions, and I had more than once taken part in it. He smiled at these fears. 'One guardian in heaven,' he said, 'is better than four here.' But in spite of this, they surrounded him with this active care. Even in the assemblies, besides those who kept watch for the

whole, there were always several who only employed themselves in caring for him.

“The young men passed on. I perceived *him*. He was twenty or twenty-five paces behind them. One single man accompanied him. It was Fabre of Nîmes, the father of one of the four advanced guards.

“What then took place? I scarcely saw or heard. He was within ten steps, and I had not moved. ‘Is it he this time?’ said the colonel. I believe I tried to say no. My agitated countenance had said yes.

“The soldiers convulsively grasped their arms. The colonel, with one foot at the entrance of the cave, prepared to spring out first. But suddenly a whistle was heard. I saw Rabaut stop, draw back, and disappear among the rocks.

“In a second all the soldiers had rushed out. They ran, but Fabre stopped them. Instead of escaping with the minister, he had placed himself in the middle of the pathway. He shouted out that they must pass over his body before advancing a single step. They sprang upon him, and bore him to the earth. But this had taken a moment, and Rabaut was already at a distance.

“Many of the soldiers sprang after him. They searched all the rocks around; they ascended all the eminences. Twenty balls awaited him, in case he could not be taken alive. At last they espied him, but out of reach. He was mounted, and escaping at full speed.

“I had remained annihilated in a corner of the cave. The joy of seeing him saved had not destroyed the recollection of what I had done to betray him. The hand of Providence, so visibly extended for his preservation, seemed to add to my treachery all the horror of a sacrilege.

“The colonel was furious. A soldier of the other post had



been perceived by one of the young men. They had given the alarm, and had been heard to salute the almost miraculous flight of their pastor with a shout of joy. The colonel was ready to run the soldier through with his sword when he heard this shout. I heard his imprecations. The soldiers themselves seemed frightened by them.

“They brought to him the venerable Fabre. He ordered, still with terrible oaths, that he should be kept a prisoner. ‘Quick!’ he said, ‘quick! His hands behind his back. To Nîmes!—to Nîmes!—and to the galleys!’ ‘Proceed,’ said Fabre. And he held out his hands.

“But his son had remained near him. He sprang before the colonel. ‘Not him!’ he cried, ‘not him! You would take him to the galleys! He would die before reaching them. A man of his age! Do you dream of such a thing? Take me!—take me!’ And he had already wrested from the hands of a soldier the cord with which they were about to tie his father.

“The discussion was long and terrible. It was not only the colonel who refused to listen to the proposal, but the old man, who implored that his son might not be heeded. ‘I should die before arriving, dost thou say? Well, be it so. I should escape the galleys, but thou wouldst remain there twenty years, thirty years. No, no! You must take me.’

“And the son again implored; and the soldiers paused, uncertain, moved.

“The infamous colonel at length burst into a laugh. ‘They want the galleys,’ he said,—‘they shall have them. Take them both.’

“But he had not concluded, before the son had snatched a sabre from one of the soldiers, and placing his back against a rock, cried, ‘Both? Let them try it! I came voluntarily to

offer myself. If they wish to take me against my will, they shall not take me alive !'

"Several soldiers were about to spring upon him with their bayonets. The father then cried, with tears, that he would consent to the exchange. The colonel appeared to perceive that his honor required him not to take a man by force who had come voluntarily. He ordered that the father should be set at liberty, and then the son no longer resisted. But they were not even allowed time for a last embrace. In a moment the prisoner and the soldiers were out of sight.

"The father had not been able to follow them. He had returned, and seated himself on the very spot where his son had given himself up. I saw him ; I heard his sobs. And I wondered why I did not dash out my brains against the sides of the cavern ! I have heard that in certain countries the assassin is fastened to the corpse of his victim. I was there, fastened to mine. But it was not a lifeless body. I must still be tormented by its sobs and tears, and by looks, which, although they did not perceive me, yet penetrated like burning daggers to the depths of my heart.

"Sometimes I was upon the point of coming out, and throwing myself at his feet, and of confessing all. It mattered little whether he pardoned or cursed me, provided that the horrible secret was no longer sealed up within me. Sometimes, on the contrary, I found some consolation in the thought that he was ignorant of it, and perhaps always would be, and that I alone should curse myself.

"But of this consolation I was soon to be deprived.

"I saw the three companions of his son approach him. I perceived that they had observed the melancholy scene from a distance. They took the old man's hands, and wept in silence.

“ ‘And do you know,’ said one of them at length, ‘do you know who betrayed us?’

“ ‘Be silent,’ said another. ‘Why should we tell him?’

“ ‘Why not, my children?’ said the venerable Fabre. ‘Tell me. It will make the blow none the more cruel.’

“ He deceived himself. He shuddered upon hearing my name. He repeated it several times, and I saw that he covered his face with his hands.

“ ‘But who told you?’ he asked. ‘How is it known? Is it certain?’

“ ‘Too certain,’ they replied. ‘It is remembered that he was seen one night coming out of Nîmes with two soldiers; and the next morning early, he returned without them. He must have brought them two by two. Come,—let us go in here.’

“ I had only time to conceal myself in a corner, when two of them entered. They were Madeleine’s two brothers! The other, I learned, had remained with the poor father, who would not enter.

“ They looked through the cave. The fragments of food proved the long stay of the soldiers. They discovered the crevice from which the path could be perceived. ‘It is without doubt from here,’ said one, ‘that they watched us. And who knows!—’ He paused. ‘What?’ asked the other. ‘Who knows whether he was not there himself to give the signal?’ He appeared to shudder at this idea. I saw them go out with precipitation, as if they feared to be contaminated by remaining any longer where a traitor might have been.

“ At the first rumor of the event the assembly had dispersed and the crowd fled; but as the departure of the soldiers was immediately made known, many returned. They wished to see this place, henceforth so mournfully remarkable. Fabre was already surrounded by friends. I heard their conversa-

tion, their narratives, and then my name, again and again my name!

"The cave was full of people. I retreated like a reptile into the furthest recesses of my place of concealment. At last I found myself on my knees in a sort of tomb; but I still continued to hear everything.

"There was a great movement, followed by a profound silence. I perceived that they were about to pray.

"A well-known voice, that of the pastor Vincent, pronounced the usual '*Our help be in the name of God;*' but in place of proceeding as usual to the confession of sins, he repeated slowly three times, '*Our help be in the name of the Lord!*'

"Never had a preacher said more in so few words; never had more sorrow penetrated through such courage and faith.

"This was his whole prayer. He comprehended that each one had completed it fittingly, and that in prolonging it he could but weaken the touching impression.

"He accordingly opened the Bible, and new blows were to fall upon me. With terror I heard him begin to read in a trembling voice, the history of the Passion. He had not gone beyond the third verse, before all present had already seized the terrible appropriateness of his words.

"*'And then,'* he said, *'entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.*

"*'And he went his way and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him unto them.*

"*'And they were glad—'*

"A repressed murmur, a shudder accompanied these words. You would have thought from their sorrowful attention, that it was the first time they had heard this mournful story.

"From time to time they appeared to forget me. They followed, with silent emotion, the history of the Saviour's long

agony. But the pitiless historian had not forgotten the traitor, and his name mentioned here and there, as if to cast a shade upon the picture, every moment recalled a murmur to their lips and indignation into their hearts.

“ ‘And truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!’

“And further on: ‘Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?’

“I thought that the minister would speak of what he had just read; but what could he have added to that which all felt? He closed the book and joined his hands. He remained a long time motionless, his eyes raised to heaven,—then— But how should I attempt to repeat to you his prayer! Ah! you, in your pompous cathedrals, you know not what it is to pray in a cavern, with captivity or death before you, and two steps from the spot where one of the members of your flock has just been torn from the embrace of a father! And I, the author of the occurrence, found a charm in lamenting with my victims. Treachery, remorse, the terrible future,—for the moment I forget all these. I lived again the life of two years back; I had again found my ardor, my faith, my purity of other days. I should have been able, I felt, to conclude this prayer, so eloquently begun. And I was only aroused to my misery by hearing him pray for me.

“They went away. I had longed for this moment, and now that it was come, I trembled. I was afraid. It seemed to me that I had been present at my own burial, and that the crowd left me alone, cold, in a corner of the grave-yard.

“At length I quitted the cave. The day had begun to decline. I awaited the night in order to depart; but I could not prevail upon myself to follow the pathway. I gained the high road by climbing over the rocks.

“Since my illness I had remained in the house of the Jesuits. Upon going in I desired to see Charnay. He refused to see me, and the next day it was signified to me that I must leave the house. I learned that the colonel had charged upon me the ill success of the expedition, and they desired nothing better than not to be obliged to pay me for my services. I was a poor traitor; these gentlemen do not like half-way blows. When I ventured again to speak of Madeleine, they laughed at me, and I could see plainly that they had never intended to restore her to me.

“The event had caused a great sensation throughout the country. The duke de Mirepoix, governor of Languedoc, offered to release young Fabre from his sentence to the galleys, upon condition that Rabaut should quit the country. Fabre had written to him imploring him to refuse; the pastor had replied, with the unanimous approbation of the churches, that nothing in the world would induce him to abandon his flock. Fabre had been sent to Toulon.

“I no longer dared show myself; the very children had learned to turn away from me. I must die, or expatriate myself. I no longer thought of dying. I felt myself condemned to live, and condemned in such sort, that it would have been useless to rebel against the decree. I resolved accordingly to depart. I had already thought of this when I believed that Madeleine was to be restored to me. I had wished to take her with me in order to seek a repose which she, I thought, as well as myself, could no longer find in our native land.

“I had, as a converted Protestant, the odious right to force my father to provide me with the means of existence independent of him.\* I wrote him declaring that I had no inten-

\* Edict of June 17th, 1681.



tion of using this right, and that I would rather die of hunger; but I asked, as an alms, some money for the voyage.

“He sent me what I had requested, but without a word of reply. I was prepared for reproaches, but this mute curse caused me more tears than I had yet shed.

“I set out for Bordeaux, from whence I intended leaving for the colonies. I was only obliged to stop in Toulouse long enough to draw from a merchant of that place the amount of the note which I had received from my father.

“This merchant, one Calas, was one of the most respectable and esteemed Protestants in the country. He received me before he knew me, with a kindness which almost surprised me, for I felt as if my history must be written on my countenance. But he had scarcely read my name before a sorrowful amazement became visible on his face. He began silently to count out the money; his hand trembled. At length he asked me, hesitatingly, whether I was a *relative* of him whose *abjuration*,—he ventured to go no further,—had lately caused such a sensation. I cast down my eyes. He sighed, and asked after my father. ‘He is as well,’ I answered, ‘as he can be after—’ I did not finish. ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I know what it is to lose a son.’ ‘One of your sons has abjured?’ I cried. He understood that I rejoiced at this news, as one rejoices to find a companion in misery. He gave me the address of his son, adding that he rarely saw him, although he had never ceased to love him. It was a delicate method of letting me know that I did not inspire him with hatred. I admired a charity which was too elevated for such an aversion; I compared it, involuntarily, with the blind hatred so generally felt among you for the deserters from your church.

“I went accordingly to seek Louis Calas, but I found in him a gloomy bigot, whose conversation destroyed the little catho-

licity which I had retained when with the Jesuits. He completed my disgust by taking a high tone, in opposition to me, for the defence of my conduct. He was not far from congratulating me upon having had occasion to raise myself in so holy a cause above the vulgar laws of conscience and honor.

“I made, however, the acquaintance of his elder brother, Mark Antony, whose character and sentiments were singularly analogous to mine. An infidel, if he had not abjured, it was only from regard for public opinion, and precisely too on account of the advantages offered by an abjuration. We, in our far off mountains, imagined the Protestants of the large cities much happier than ourselves. It is true that you leave them more undisturbed ; but how many privations, how many bitternesses are there, which we did not suspect, and of which they experienced and do now experience the maddening influence ! They are allowed to enrich themselves by commerce, and many indeed, by means of their strict probity,\* do this ; but to those who desire more than money, the path is blocked up on whichever side they turn. The magistracy, the bar, instruction, medicine, offices of all kinds, the smallest as well as the greatest, are inexorably denied them ; the only thing open to them, besides commerce, is that rude and laborious ministry in which at each step they stumble on the scaffold of some one of their predecessors. But in the cities few possess the courage

\* Rulhière, in his “*Explanations of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*,” makes a somewhat curious remark. It is that during the first half of the reign of Louis XIV., satires and comedies made no attacks whatever on the financiers, so cried down shortly afterwards. Now during this period, the majority of them were Protestants,

This financial and commercial probity must, moreover have been singularly well established, since at the height of the subsequent persecutions, when calumny was so commonly brought to the aid of violence, this subject was never touched upon.



and strength to enter upon this. They must have been accustomed from childhood to this rude and wandering life; they must have gradually become accustomed to this daily and hourly peril.

“The elder Calas would have had as much courage as any one I believe; but he had not felt himself fit for so solemn a calling, and had from conscientious scruples given up the studies to be gone through for the ministry. Full of talent and ambition, abhorring the obscure toils of commerce, he had seen himself condemned to vegetate without position, without future, in the old paternal country house. Idleness had encouraged vice, vice infidelity. A thousand new torments had filled the fatal void of his existence. Accordingly, as I soon saw, he cherished the design to free himself from it as soon as he should become decidedly weary of its weight.

“Such was Mark Antony at the time when I knew him. In a few days I was his best friend. He persuaded me to remain at Toulouse. There was no need that I should banish myself, he said. I could easily live unknown in so populous a city. I had only to change my name.

“The idea began to please me. I asked nothing better than to stay; but I must live, and how? ‘Bah!’ replied Calas; ‘in a city one can always live.’ I insisted. At last, he informed me of a resource, which, as he said, had never yet failed him. It was gaming. ‘Gaming!’ I cried; ‘and if I should lose?’ ‘You will not lose,’ he said. ‘But if I should?’ I repeated. ‘If you lose? Well, you can do—what many others have done,—what I shall also do when I lose.’

“He startled me and I allowed myself to be led. I surrendered myself to vice as I had to fanaticism, without passion, without taste. It seemed if I had coldly taken the part of executor of some inexorable decree pronounced against me.

“ Yet it was not without a strong emotion, that for the first time I crossed the threshold of a gaming house. I recalled with horror all I had heard related of these dens, where so many have left their fortune, their honor, their life. The recollections of virtue caused a last attempt to arrest myself upon the verge of the abyss of vice.

“ It was in vain; but vice on the other hand, did not succeed in dazzling me, even at the moment when I gave myself up entirely to its dominion. The first day—I said to myself,—I shall gain; the second, I shall lose; the third—we shall see. And in fact, I gained on the first day, I lost on the second, and on the third I returned ready to stake all that remained.

“ Whilst I awaited my turn, my attention was suddenly attracted by a too well-known voice,—that of the colonel. He was in a neighboring saloon, where were accustomed to sup, after the games were over, all the most abandoned of both sexes in Toulouse. Without being seen myself, I could see him haranging in the midst of a group; it even seemed to me that I heard my name.

“ I gradually drew nearer. He was in the midst of relating his last *campaign*, as he said, and his ambuscade in the desert. He was just completing the account of Rabaut’s escape, and how he had taken Fabre instead of Rabaut, and finally the son instead of the father. The audience laughed, and the history as he related it, was not far from being exceedingly amusing.

“ But when the audience thinking that he had finished, began to disperse, he said; ‘ Do you think I have finished? You have not yet heard the most curious part.’ They all returned. I slipped through the crowd within three steps of him.

“ ‘ You remember,’ he resumed, ‘ the poor simpleton whom we persuaded by means of the name of his Madeleine to do everything we wished. The best of the joke is, that while we

led him on by talking of her, we led her also, but in a very different path, as you will see, by talking of him.'

"And then, to the great amusement of my neighbors, was described the abominable plot which I might have suspected, but which I never could have suspected to be within many degrees so impudently perfidious.

"Madeleine had accordingly daily received news of me, as false as that which had been brought me of her. Long before my apostasy, when as yet I had scarcely begun to entertain the idea, they had announced to her its completion; also that I desired, that I was even anxious, she should follow my example. Stronger than I had been, this first blow had not shaken her. They reserved for her a second. For a long time she heard nothing more of me. She wept in silence, but would listen to nothing more. At length she was induced to ask what I was about; then they pretended that they dared not reply. She insisted. At length they told her that I was married. But the proselyters again gained nothing by their falsehood. She was more blest than I; God remained with her. She wept, but she was not subdued.

"This story aroused in me the most contending emotions. I was happy and proud to find that Madeleine was pure and noble, as she had been of old; but every one of these traits showed me how unworthy I now was of her. But even in the midst of these revelations, in which she appeared to me so courageous and so firm, the triumphant air of the narrator indicated that he was not yet through, and I awaited with increasing anxiety a conclusion which I trembled lest I should find little in agreement with the beginning.

"He went on to relate how, having had occasion to see Madeleine, he had found her to his taste. The part which he played, through his regiment, in the conversions of the pr

ince, gained him access into the convent. He had been enabled to talk with her alone. He had showed admiration of her steadfastness, pity for her misfortunes. A master in the art of beguiling, he had always remained grave and respectful, and she had finally accepted, without suspicion, the offer of his assistance in escaping from this odious house.

“Accordingly, one night he carried her off. He would take her immediately to her relations, he had told her. Then it appeared to occur to him that she would not be in security there, at least for a time, and he offered her an asylum with a lady of high rank whom she knew by name. ‘I did not even speak of accompanying her,’ he added. ‘She entered my carriage; she saw me respectfully close the door. The trick was played; the bird taken.’

“‘Bravo, colonel!’ cried a young officer who stood beside me listening.

“The colonel turning, perceived me. I observed him grow pale. He turned to go away, as if the story was ended. ‘Go on! go on!’ was the cry; and they followed him laughing, for they doubted not that this feigned departure was in order to pique their curiosity. But I advanced in front of the others, and placing myself before him, said, ‘Go on, Monsieur!’ in a tone which it was soon perceived contained nothing like a jest.

“But this sudden attack had already restored to him his coolness. He stopped and said, with profound contempt, ‘Go on? Does Monsieur take me for a man who may be questioned, or who can be induced by threats to speak?’

“‘You shall speak!’ I cried.

“And I had already seized him by the arm. But his friends threw themselves upon me. Calas, who wished to defend, could not even approach me. In an instant we were expelled from the house.

“I was beside myself. I wished to run to the Hôtel de Ville, to lay my complaint before the magistrates. Calas laughed at me. ‘A complaint on account of a scene in a gaming house! A complaint against the marquis de Narniers, the right arm of the clergy in the province!’ There was, moreover, he added, a certain sheriff, a sworn enemy of the Calas, who would also become mine, so soon as he knew me to be their friend. In short, I must pocket the offence, or ask satisfaction sword in hand.

“A duel! Another of the things whose very name, from a slight reminiscence of my sentiments of other days, seemed to me an outrage against the holiest laws. But it was decreed that I should trample upon all that I had adored. An hour after, I was at the corner of the street, where, sword in hand, I awaited the colonel’s appearance.

“He came out. I went up to him. Calas remained at a short distance.

“‘Monsieur,’ I said, ‘you doubtless do not imagine that the affair can remain here? Answer—or defend yourself.’

“But he, without even stopping, said:

“‘These fellows are strangely insolent.’

“Then, half turning, as if towards a beggar of whom he wished to rid himself, he said, ‘But, my friend, where did you ever hear of a gentleman fighting with a maniac?’

“I sprang upon him; I seized him.

“‘Thou shalt defend thyself,’ I repeated, ‘or die.’

“Did I really mean to kill him, if he refused to fight? God is my witness that I did not. What would I have done? I know not. But already, as I held him, I asked what I ought to do. I was stronger than he. It only remained with me to stab him; but that alone would have restrained me, even if I had wished to do it. At length I thought that he put his hand



on his sword. I let him go,—and scarcely was his arm at liberty, when a pistol bullet grazed my cheek. But I had had time to see him raise his arm. I had thrown myself on one side; and at the moment when the shot was fired, I heard a cry. In throwing my hands forward to ward off a blow, I had pierced his breast.

“Windows were thrown open; the street was lighted. Calas dragged me away. I remained some days concealed in the house of one of his friends. A search was made in his house, I learned. He asserted that he had quitted me a short time after our expulsion, and neither knew what I had done, nor what had become of me. The affair was carried on, moreover, with great activity. Nothing was spoken of but the attempted *assassination* of the marquis de Narniers. The description of the criminal, as complete as it could be made, had been sent everywhere, and a reward was promised to whoever should discover me.

“Although I had no fear of the intentions of my host, I resolved to leave Toulouse. It was a torture for me to live thus shut up. I must breathe the air of the country, although at each step I might risk my life or liberty.

“I set out. A long beard and tattered clothes gave me the aspect of one of those vagabonds who are allowed by the patrols of the South to beg around the country.

“After having for some days submitted to this half savage life as a necessity, it was to appear to me beneath a new aspect.

“I shall never forget the moment when this strange transformation took place. It was in the evening, on the side of a great highway, in the outskirts of a wood where I was about to seek shelter for the night. Around me were trees; before me were hills, behind which the sun was going to disappear,—the whole scene, in short, of the banks of the Gard! But

there, before my feet, in place of the river which murmured and darkened, was the silent, white road,—the road, now my only home, as the waves of the Gard had seemed my only asylum when I had resolved to end my days beneath them. Then it seemed to me as if I were in the same place, at the foot of the same rock which had beheld me fall when I perceived Rabaut. The road had miraculously covered the bed of the river! The condemnation was written where the crime was to have been committed! My life, instead of ending, was to drag on indefinitely from road to road, from village to village, until the inward voice which had bidden me journey should command me to stop.

“And thus you see how, moving from road to road, from village to village, and from city to city, I arrived in two years where you found me. Never during these two years have I slept in an inhabited dwelling; never did a second night find me in the same spot. Seated at the doors of the churches like the penitents of old, I never have crossed their threshold. As houses of God, I felt myself unworthy of entering them; as the houses of priests, I could not have entered them without horror. And never did a priest pass me that my heart, revolted, did not murmur: ‘It is thanks to thee and thine that I am here!’ Can you understand now what I felt at Meaux in asking alms of you?”

## X.

### MADELEINE.

“I can understand,” said Bridaine. “Hast thou finished?”

“I have.”

“Thou hast not told me all. What has become of Madeleine?”



“I do not know.”

“Absolutely?”

“Absolutely. I imposed on myself the determination never to inquire. What should I gain by it? Pure, the remembrance of her would have sharpened my remorse. Lost, I must have accused myself of her fate while mourning her.”

Bruyn spoke the truth. He was ignorant of the fate of his betrothed.

We have heard that she was at Meaux. Before going further, we may mention how she had come there.

The marquis had retained her at Toulouse. Free at first, at least in appearance, she had gradually become his prisoner. He found it amusing to put into practice what he had, as yet, only read in romances.

But he gained nothing from all his trouble. Threats and attentions were equally without effect upon the virtue of Madeleine. He soon saw that he must renounce his designs, or else have recourse to means which he disliked to use, for in spite of his resolution he had submitted to the influence of his victim. He was angry at himself for respecting her so much. He was only withheld by vanity from setting her at liberty, and wished nothing better in reality, than to rid himself of her.

It was the abbé who came to his aid. The priest boasted of being more fortunate than the soldier; he asserted that in a month he would have gained more ground with Madeleine than the marquis in a year.

She had accordingly been conducted to Meaux. A month had passed, and the abbé was no farther advanced than his brother.

## XI.

## TWO PETITIONS GRANTED.

“So thou hast nothing more to tell me?” resumed Bridaine.

“Nothing.”

“Nothing to ask me?”

“No,—but stay. Yes,—I have two things to ask you.”

“Let me hear them.”

“One is to accompany me when I shall be led—”

“Be it so. But I hope—”

“Let us hope nothing. You promise?”

“I promise.”

“But it is a friend I want, I must forewarn you. Not a confessor.”

“Unhappy man! Wilt thou reject—”

“All that does not come from God. I wish to be taught to approach him,—I do not wish that any one should put himself between Him and me.”

“Then thou hast again become a Protestant?”

“I have begun again to be a Christian.”

“Christian!—And yet to refuse—”

“All which does not come from God, as I said before. Would you rather that I should be an infidel?”

Bridaine sighed. He could not, in fact, conceal from himself that an infidel, submissive and ready to confess, would have less shocked him in the first moment, than a man refusing his priestly aid from conviction. Rome has always been infinitely more indulgent towards those who do not believe at all, than those who believe differently from her, and it would be very difficult, not to say impossible, for a priest always to

escape this singular impulse. We have seen Bridaine at Nîmes offer Bruyn of his own accord a simple benediction; and now we see him alarmed at the idea of letting him die, without having given him officially—what? A pardon which he knows to be nothing unless confirmed by God.

“No,” he resumed, “I cannot. If I accompany thee whither thou wilt,—it must be as a priest.”

“Well, let us talk no more of it. I had something else to ask you.”

“Say on.”

“There is but one pardon in the world which would appear to me in dying an earnest of the pardon of God.”

“I understand.”

“Let me, before I die, see him who can alone give it. Is he still at Meaux?”

“He is at Paris, but I do not know where.”

“Have you no trace?”

“None.”

“Then there is no hope. But no,—stay— Do you know Monsieur de Gebelin?”

“The orientalist? No— But if it be only necessary to go and see him—”

“You will go? Well, then, for God’s sake go to him. He is the friend of Monsieur Rabaut. He must know where he is.”

“I will go? Adieu, my son.”

“Adieu, my Father. Your blessing was a comfort to me at Nîmes.”

“Receive it again. Adieu.”

And the prisoner rose as though to accompany the priest. The noise of his chains warned him that he could only take one step. He stopped.

“You see?” he said.

“What matters it, if the soul be free?”

“Yes— But if it be not free?”

And he again seated himself, sadly.

## XII.

### BRIDAINE WITNESSES A SINGULAR SPECTACLE.

And yet although Bridaine had almost promised to save him, he did not know how to set about it; he even thought it very fortunate that this glimmer of hope had not dazzled the prisoner too much, for he could not conceal from himself that it might all fade away. Justice in the time of Louis XV. did not easily let go her prey. In spite of the wise regulations which Louis XIV. had mingled with the old customs, they were very far from having been entirely reformed. “When Monsieur de Malesherbes,” says the abbé Morellet, “had read my *Manual of Inquisitors*, he said, ‘you think you have collected extraordinary facts, unheard of proceedings? Well, this jurisprudence is almost precisely similar to our criminal jurisprudence.’” This was true. The judges were commonly better than the justice, but they were not to be trusted. Every one who was accused was accounted guilty; still more so every one who was condemned. It might happen that Bridaine could touch the judges by an account of Bruyn’s sufferings, and that Bruyn would for all that not be saved,—for the honor of the parliament of Toulouse, and of Justice in general. The tribunals had not yet learned to refuse each other these little favors. The life of a man began indeed to be worth something; but far more in the fashionable books of the day, than on the bench or scaffold.\*

\* The state of the prisons was in accordance with the barbarity of the

Bridaine was moreover ignorant of the favorable thoughts of the marquis de Narniers, but he was none the less resolved to try him. He would go and visit all the councillors in turn if it was needful. He would gain the assistance of the archbishop. He would summon the marquis to speak the truth and confess that there had been no assassination. He would go to the duke de Choiseul, to the king. Did not he know the way ?

While he walked, full of these thoughts, through the corridors of the *Palais de Justice*, the smell of burnt paper suddenly attracted his attention. He feared the breaking out of a fire, but no one among the persons in sight seemed to be uneasy in respect to it.

When he reached the top of the great staircase in order to go out, he found himself in sight of the explanation which he wished.

In the midst of the court was a small pile of wood, upon which were some books burning. He perceived that it was one of those harmless auto-da-fés which took place from time to time, for the amusement of the Parisians.

At this moment, however, there were but few spectators

system. The greater number were horrid receptacles where accused and condemned were herded together like the meanest beasts. It was not until the time of Louis XVI. that any attention was paid to the physical state of the prisoners. The abbé de Besplas, preaching at Versailles, drew a picture of it which greatly struck the king. The courtiers were astonished that so many horrors had remained unperceived in the midst of so refined an age.

The hospitals, moreover, were not much better than the prisons. At Paris, three patients were still put into one bed. A century before they had put as many as six.

These details, it may be remarked in passing, are little like what Châteaubriand has related of the marvels of Catholic charity. Protestant countries were already quite different as regards humanity.

either in the court or the streets leading to it. People were seen to approach and inquire what was going on; the thing had evidently not been announced beforehand. There was even an appearance of stealth in the proceedings. A bailiff read the decrees, but so quickly and in so low a voice that the nearest bystanders could scarcely catch a few words. Two councillors in their robes presided at the execution. They seemed embarrassed. One of them especially, seemed to think that the bailiff did not read rapidly enough, that the books burnt too slowly. And more than one waggish clerk slyly observed the effects of this impatience upon the very ugly countenance of the abbé de Chauvelin, for it was he. All, down to the very hangman, seemed to be in haste to get through with it. In place of "*destroying*" the books, as the decrees expressed it, he confined himself to tearing out a page or two, and the fire did the rest.

Not that all these writings which they made a feint of destroying were not bad, detestably bad. The flames had already devoured the "*Chinese letters*," of D'Argens, the *Vision*, of Grimm, the *Christianity unmasked*, of Damilaville, the *Man-plant*, of La Mettrie, five or six anonymous pamphlets where Voltaire's hand betrayed itself in every line, and five or six works signed with the unknown names of people thinking themselves in possession of mind enough to prove that man is a *brute*. The harvest was abundant we perceive, and it must be acknowledged that so long as they must burn, the parliament could not have chosen better. But from the president to the bailiff, from the attorney-general to the hangman, all felt that it was lost labor. Some of them, partisans of the new ideas, only looked upon it as a comedy to be played until the age should be ripe for the predicted regeneration; the others more sincere, understood all the better on that account, the use



lessness of the part they played, and the nothingness of their efforts. From these causes proceeded the embarrassment of all; and also the singular contrivances by which they endeavored at least to escape ridicule, even if they must cast a few grains of incense into the flame where they threw the books.

### XIII.

#### L'ESPRIT, OF HELVÉTIUS.

There remained but one to be burned. Bridaine thought he perceived that the two councillors looked still more embarrassed. The bailiff read low, so low that nothing at all was to be heard.

The passers by had gradually increased the number of spectators; there was almost a crowd. "Louder!" cried somebody. "Louder," repeated several others. Bridaine then bent all his attention to listen. He thought he distinguished the words, *poison, philosophy, venom, esprit*.

"Ah, ha!" said a subordinate clerk, "it appears that it is 'The Mind,' (*l'Esprit*), of Monsieur Helvétius."

"Come!" said another. "Hast thou at last discovered that? It is for his benefit that the whole ceremony takes place."

"For him? And what of these others, then?"

"The others are only there in order to keep him company. *Messieurs* were desirous of burning the book, but they did not wish to grieve the author, who is the good friend of almost all of them. Since—thou canst not comprehend—he was once farmer of the revenues, master of the household to the queen, and a man of one hundred thousand crowns income! When the poison is in a golden vessel one cannot do less than be polite



in throwing it into the fire. So *Messieurs* resolved to unite in the same batch, all that remained burnable in France."

"And dost thou call that polite, pray? If I were named Helvétius, there are people there whose ashes I should care little to have mixed with mine."

"Well, the name is accordingly not mentioned in the decree. What they wanted, dost thou see, was that the parliament should not appear to have lighted the fire entirely for him. 'You are burning books are you, master hangman? Well, here, since you are about it you may as well burn us up these too without any fuss.' Wait, the clerk is just passing the volume to Samson. Courage, Samson, my friend! Tear, tear,—come! a little more firmness! To-day at least, art thou the executor of all sorts of works!—Good! there is *Mind* in the fire. It burns, but it does not sparkle. In fact, I found it perfectly tiresome."

"Thou hast read it?"

"Six pages, of which I understood nothing, unless it was that in place of calling the work *Mind*, it would have been more honest to call it *Matter*. Ho! what is all that? A man wants to throw himself out of the window?"

In fact, a man had been perceived clapping his hands, in the fourth story window of a neighboring house. Two or three others whose arms alone were visible, endeavored to draw him back, but he leaned still further out of the window, and still clapped his hands, which remained at liberty. At length he was drawn back into the apartment, and the window was closed. Helvétius went on burning.

"Some madman," said one of the two clerks.

"Or some fanatic," said the other, "who has become so from joy at the smell of this burned infidelity. That is all, I think."

"Probably. But no. What is it they are bringing out there?"

## XIV.

## A STRANGE AUTO-DA-FÉ.

Two bailiffs had rolled up a great bale of books to the side of the smoking remains of Voltaire and Helvétius. Then, in his nasal tone, but this time perfectly loud and clear, like a man perfectly at his ease, the clerk read the following decree :

“The court,

“In consideration of the notification of the king, date 24th of April, 1729, concerning books used by the so-called reformed religion, under whatsoever title, form and denomination, they may appear ;

“And in consideration, that notwithstanding the said notification, and the decrees consequent upon the application of the same, there have recently been made divers attempts to introduce these books into the kingdom, in order to spread abroad the poison which the late king of glorious memory had begun to extirpate, and which the king our lord has pursued into its remotest hiding places ;

“And in consideration of the verbal process, date May 15, 1760, witnessing that a bale of the said works has been seized in the possession of Master Dumont, bookseller of Paris ;

“The attorney-general having been heard in his various representations and requisitions,

“In all things concerning said Master Dumont ;

“In consideration of the notification of the king, bearing date August 10, 1685, pronouncing condemnation to fine of fifteen hundred livres, with deprivation of employment, against the booksellers who should hold or sell said books ;

“In consideration, on the one hand, that he does not deny having known the contents of the before-mentioned bale;

“In consideration, on the other hand, of his declaration that he has sold none of the volumes therein enclosed, but that he awaited, without even opening it, the arrival of the third, to him unknown party, in order to take possession of it;

“Pronounces that there is no cause for decreeing the deprivation of employment;

“Condemns Dumont only to a fine of fifteen hundred livres, of which falls a third to the king, a third to the Hôtel Dieu of Paris, and a third to the informer, who has demanded, according to the tenor of the ordinances, not to be named;

“And concerning the books seized,

“Orders that the attorney-general shall see that they are carried to the depôt of the court, in order by the executioner to be torn up and burned in the court of the palace, at the foot of the grand staircase, as pernicious and seditious, contrary to the laws and maxims of the religion of the State.

“Given at Paris, July 15, 1760.”

During the reading of this decree, the hangman's assistants had restored the fire, and enlarged the pile of wood. The bailiffs emptied the bale. It contained four or five hundred volumes, and, so far as could be judged from a distance, they were all copies of the same work. The hangman took one, then a second, then a third, and threw them one after the other into the flames, after having torn them in two. The fourth time he took an armful, then another armful, and thus he continued. From time to time he tore one. At length all were in the fire, but it was only by means of the faggots of wood that they could be made to burn. The spectators began to laugh, and the two councillors had prudently gone into the

palace. Some of the leaves of the book were picked up, as the wind scattered them, half burned, about the court. Many were highly entertained by them. Some, after having decyphered a few lines, showed them to one another with an air of surprise.

The book which had just been torn and burned by the hangman, at the foot of the grand staircase of the Palace of Justice, in Paris, in the year of grace 1760, was—

Bridaine had picked up two leaves of it, and had with a sigh put them into his pocket. Let us leave them there: we shall find them again.

## XV.

### THE CHARACTER AND WORKS OF HELVÉTIUS.

Our readers doubtless know from what window came the singular applause which was heard. But from whom this applause came, it remains for us to say.

The guests of Helvétius had been punctual at the rendezvous. The occasion was worth this trouble. Then an invitation of Monsieur Helvétius was never willingly refused, even if it were an invitation to the fourth story, and in one of the narrow, winding streets of the Cité.\*

To those whom we saw once before at the house of Helvetius were added, by special invitation, several other members of the sect,—the abbé Raynal, already famous; the abbé Morellet, who was to be so, for he had just come from the Bastile; Saint Lambert, author of the *Seasons*; Thiriot, Voltaire's factotum; and two or three less generally known; among them Doctor Roux, who preached atheism with so much unction and *faith*.

\* The island in the Seine upon which stands Notre-Dame and the Palace of Justice is called the *Cité*. Tr.

If the neighborhood appeared to them rather dirty, and the stairs rather steep, they could not help forgetting this when they entered. The humble lodging hired by the former farmer of the revenues had been metamorphosed in a few days into a charming little dwelling.

When they had expressed their admiration and astonishment,—for it was not supposed that he had had any other object in view than that of receiving his guests agreeably,—he said :

“Come, you have not yet seen everything.”

And beaming with satisfaction, he opened the door of a little kitchen, furnished like the rest,—bright, charmingly neat, and provided with every utensil,—and common utensils, moreover which were evidently not there on account of this breakfast given by him.

“Well, do you guess?” he asked. “I was determined that our frolic of to-day should at least be the occasion of a good deed. In the teeth of the parliament, which is going to burn my book, I install here, no later than to-morrow, a brave lad of my acquaintance, a clerk of Dumont, the bookseller. He is going to be married. He has not a cent except five hundred livres, which have been left him, he says, by a cousin of his. He intended using them to build his nest; and lo! the nest is ready here, and he still has his five hundred livres. He knows nothing of it as yet. I long for to-morrow, that I may see his delight. He is going to invite me to his wedding. I shall go! I shall go! It will be one of my gala days. Ha! ha! Messieurs of the parliament, while you take your method of disgracing me, I must reinstate myself in my own way.”

This was the character of Helvétius. It would have been necessary to go very high in the Christian scale to find believers so happy as he to do good; and if he labored as hard as he

could to take from people all hope of another life, it must be allowed that he also neglected nothing that might soften the hardships of the present! Everything about him breathed kindness of heart. With one of the handsomest countenances in France, he pleased without intimidating; he did not like to be with people whom his presence made ill at ease. He excelled in giving without degrading, without wounding; very different from the stout La Popelinière, his imitator, who only succeeded in throwing his money to the dogs, and making his house a tiresome collection of every sort of person. We may add also, that he often allowed himself to be deceived. Is this a criticism, or is it a further eulogium? Just as may be preferred. It is certain that if, in doing good, he renounced the recompenses of heaven, those of earth were not wanting. The whole coterie, from Voltaire to the merest versifier, contended which should sound his praises the loudest. Helvetius was the virtuous man of the day—the living reply to all those who dared to pretend that it was necessary to believe in God, in order to be so. How far did this antagonism and these praises influence his love of goodness? Without these trumpeters, would he have loved it so much? Did he perform good actions, or *splendid sins*, as Saint Augustine says? God alone could see; it is not for us to judge.

As for his weight as a philosopher, it would be superfluous to demonstrate how much his position and services have contributed to exaggerate it. Very few infidels at the present time would like to subscribe to his book; very few indeed would be proud of having written it. They would have no reason, indeed, to be proud of having done so, for such a book could have no success. “The work does not answer to the title. The author takes great pains, to prove truisms, and what he says new is not always true. He outrages humanity by putting on



the same level pride, ambition, avarice, and friendship. There are false quotations in it, puerile stories, and a mixture of poetic style and one puffed up with the language of philosophy. Little order, much confusion, a revolting affectation of bepraising poor works, and an air of decision still more revolting, etc., etc." This judgment is not written by us, but by Voltaire.\* D'Alembert, Grimm, Raynal, Morellet, Diderot himself, who had written out more than one page of it, in short all the friends of the author, expressed in private the same opinion of the book, which did not prevent them, according to their custom, from crushing with sarcasms any one who might openly speak ill of it.

Almost all the refutations of it had in truth been miserable; the greater part of them had been no better than the work itself, if not worse.† We have already had occasion to remark how poor France was, in good apologetical works. Among this flood of anti-Christian publications, there were scarcely to be found here and there some works which were not from their weakness, rather calculated to aid the efforts of impiety. In spite of many mandates, whether or not written by the bishops, the best thing to be found was the old *Apology* of Abbadie, which had so much success at the close of the preceding century.‡ Accordingly, this was frequently reprinted. The bishops recommended it, the professors quoted it; they

\* Letter to Thiriot, Feb. 7, 1759.

† *Catechism of the Cacouacs*, by the abbé de Saint-Cyr, under-tutor of the royal children of France; *Catechism of the Mind*, by the abbé Gauthet; *Thanks to the Philosophers of the day*, by Rémond de Saint-Sauveur, etc., etc.

‡ *Treatise upon the Christian Religion*, by Abbadie, which appeared at Rotterdam, in 1684. "Until now," wrote Bussi to Madame de Sevigné, "I have not been touched by any of the books which speak of God. But this one makes me value that for which I did not care. Once more,



merely neglected to mention that Abbadie was a *Protestant minister*, and would have perished like any other if he had been caught bringing his book into France.

## XVI.

## FRENCH JOURNALS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

Great, accordingly, were the praises in regard to this *brave fellow* whom Helvétius was going to put into these furnished lodgings. Then they sat down and begun to converse.

The conversation of a party of literary men in 1760, was something quite brilliant. At the present day we talk literature, or politics, or philosophy, or sciences; then, they talked of all these at once, for all were bound or mingled together, and it was even in a great measure on this account that the *Encyclopedia*, a jumble as it was, of so many things, was the truest expression of the society of the day. In our re-unions, every one, thanks to the newspapers, is furnished with an immense common stock of ideas and facts; then, it was necessary that this common stock should be collected in the re-unions themselves. Every time that people met, they had everything to tell one another; each one had to add to the information of all; and all had something to add to the information of each one.

There were then no newspapers, at least in the sense attached to this word since the revolution. The two publications which resembled them most nearly were the *Gazette of France* and the *Mercury*, and these were still what we should call reviews.

The *Gazette of France* had often changed hands. Sometimes it is an admirable book. It sets vividly before my mind all that it says, and forces my reason to doubt no longer those things which appeared to it incredible."

free,—with the exception of the *censure* be it understood,—sometimes attached to the department of foreign affairs, of which it then became the official organ, its nature and editorship were generally about the same. It put forth all that the government judged good to publish, or to allow to be published, either domestic, or more especially foreign news. Few articles of weight were found in it, save from time to time a few tirades against the enemies of the French name. There, were to be read the court news, the marriages of high and mighty lords, the entrances of the ambassadors, the great hunting parties, the great balls, the great births and the great deaths. There was often nothing at all said on many subjects about which all would have been glad to read a few lines ; but then it was always to be seen at full length how such and such a squadron had made its appearance in the seas of India or Mexico, how such and such a pasha had promised satisfaction to the French standard, how the brave sailors of Saint-Malo or Havre-de-Grâce had taken such and such a number of whales and cachalots, how the Jesuit fathers had just been created mandarins, etc.

The *Mercury* was a little less a government, and a little more a national journal, so far, at least, as there was any nation at that time. The Encyclopedia had a finger in it, through Marmontel ; but the Marmontel of the *Mercury* had scarcely the ability to belong to the Encyclopedia. The *Mercury* was more than anything else, a literary journal ; facts only appeared there arrayed in high-sounding prose, or in verse more or less piquant. It was he who must narrate after the victories how *Champagne* or *Normandy*, those old types of regiments, had repulsed the Germans, English, or others ; he must shout after the defeats, “ All is lost save our honor ! ” which was, be it said, not always true.

We may mention, in order to complete the list, the *Ecclesiastical News*, organ of the Jansenists, the *Literary Year*, of Fréron, the *Journal de Trévoux*, organ of the Jesuits, and one or two other reviews, and we shall have, with the reports of the academiës, all the periodical publications of about the middle of the last century. Nothing daily, nothing complete, nothing which was not necessarily behind-hand with the conversations of every day.

We complain, and not without reason, of the inaccuracies with which our papers abound. But how long do these mistakes last? The greater number, not more than twenty four hours. What one journal misstates, ten others rectify. If it gives you a false piece of news this morning, it will withdraw it to-morrow. The printing of a piece of news moreover, necessarily stops any further alteration of it. If it has the inconvenience of seizing, on their first going off, a multitude of things only half true, it at least fixes them before they have time to become quite false. Then discussion ensues, proofs are brought forward, and it is rare that the most complicated things are not made clear in the course of a few days. In those days, however, there was nothing of the kind. All the labor which now takes place among the papers, and gradually, must be performed in the saloons, and founded upon hear-say,—upon stories which were modified from hour to hour, from one moment to another, according as they passed through more or fewer hands. Some, from indolence, adopted the habit of believing everything, and there was no absurdity which they could not be made to credit; others discussed everything un- tiringly, and there were few men, even the most serious, whose conversation did not frequently turn to gossip.

## XVII.

## VOLTAIRE'S IMPLACABILITY.

Our encyclopedists, with the exception of Grimm, had scarcely been together half an hour, and of what had not they already talked!

Two or three subjects, however, had had the first, and the principal attention.

One, the most exciting, was the representation of the *Ecos-saise*, which had taken place on the preceding evening, but which had been very near not taking place, for the government had repented having authorized it, and it had been feared to the last moment that the authorization might be withdrawn. An order had been received to change the name of *Frélon* as too much resembling that of *Fréron*.\*

The success had not answered their expectations. A certain portion of the public had applauded, but the real public had remained cool. The piece had appeared weak, very weak, as it is, in fact, and manifestly inferior to that of which it was expected to efface the impression. The '*Ecossaise*' had only served to remind people of the '*Philosophers*,' and make them wish to see or read the latter piece again. If Palissot, in attacking, had not always confined himself within the bounds of good taste, Voltaire in replying had always confined himself to the worst. His *Frélon* is a sort of brute whose absurd and odious part has not even the merit of being necessary to the plot. It is only a rough sort of patchwork, and a patchwork the sight of which makes one feel too well how all the rest has been made. The five acts, in short, were written in order to

\* They had accordingly substituted *Wasp*, the English translation of *Frélon*.

introduce five or six scenes which are more malicious than witty. If this judgment appears severe we must refer to that of Grimm in his correspondence, some weeks before the representation.

The public trial of the piece, had caused all these faults to appear still more prominent; the Encyclopedists felt themselves only poorly revenged. They tried to blame the actors for it. It was because Mademoiselle Gaussin had spoiled the part of Lindane; or Mademoiselle Dangeville had spoiled Polly. Brizard had weakened Monrose; Armand had not understood Fabrice; etc., etc. But they ended by confessing that neither Lindane nor Fabrice, nor Monrose, nor Polly, were after all worth much. They asked with some alarm, if the patriarch was on the wane, and calculated not without uneasiness, the chances he might have of regaining lost ground by his *Tancred*, then actually in rehearsal.

Apropos to *Tancred*, a question had recently arisen. When Aménaïde is led to the execution must the public perceive the scaffold?

The idea was suggested by Mademoiselle Clairon, who was to play Aménaïde. Opinions had been divided. The decision of the author was awaited with great impatience.

Was this one of the questions whose importance arose out of a want of more serious objects, and the idleness of the disputants?

Not entirely. It contained, as was subsequently perceived, the germ of discussions of a higher significance. *Tancred* without the scaffold was Racine; *Tancred* with the scaffold was Shakspeare.

Accordingly Voltaire had shuddered at the thought. He had written to the actress, forbidding her to dream of it, to his correspondents begging them not to allow it, and Thiriot showed a letter from him containing this passage:

“What do you think of Clairon, with her scaffold upon the stage? Is it not a fine idea to wish to change the French theatre into a *place de Grève*? My friend, let us fight the English, but not imitate their barbarous stage. Let us study their philosophy, let us drive out the Jesuits and the wolves, let us not blindly fight against attraction, nor inoculation, let us learn from them to cultivate the earth, but let us take care not to imitate their savage ideas of the stage. No, no! this abominable idea is only fit for the English theatre. If the scaffold were for Fréron,—well and good; but for Clairon,—I cannot permit it.”

“There must always be a fling at Fréron,” said Helvétius.

He did not like this inveterate hatred. He advocated war against ideas, he said, not against individuals.

“Always,” said Damilaville. “He never lets him alone. See what he writes me on the same day. ‘It is not enough to render Fréron ridiculous; to crush him is the great pleasure.’”

“That is very bad, now,” resumed Helvétius. “We attack; the others defend themselves. When one deals out blows, why be astonished to receive others in return? Go on. What more does he say?”

“‘To crush him is the great pleasure. But all these passions fade before the cordial hatred which I bear towards the impudent Omer. Since I cannot chop off the hand with which he wrote his famous request, I—’”

“Enough,” said Helvétius. “It would be very mortifying for us if such lines should come to be known. Monsieur de Fleury did his duty. He showed more courage in attacking my book than I in writing it.”

This was true; but Helvétius was almost the only one who did not give himself up to these bitter hatreds of which Voltaire fanned the flame.



“He takes good care,” he resumed, “not to write me such things. I too had a letter. Here it is.\* He calls the attorney general “our enemy,” nothing more. He consoles me by speaking of the progress made by philosophy.”

“And he gives you a curious specimen of it,” added d’Holbach. “You would never guess, gentlemen, from whom he has just had a visit at Ferney. Our Omer’s own son!”

This was also true. While the father caused the writings of Voltaire to be burned at Paris, the son went to Ferney, to sacrifice upon the altar of the divinity of the day.

## XVIII.

### PECULIARITIES OF ROUSSEAU.

They talked of Ferney and of Voltaire. And now they talked also of Rousseau.

What did they say of him? They did not know what to say; he became every day more incomprehensible.

His *New Héloïse*, his *Julie*, as it was called, was awaited with increasing impatience. The bookstores were besieged with people who asked after it. Its success was certain, more than certain.

“Well,” said d’Holbach, “I went yesterday to Montmorency, and found Rousseau more ennuyé, sulkier, more bearish than ever. He had that very morning rudely refused a basket of game sent him by the prince de Conti, with the message, as an additional piece of politeness, that it had been killed by his own hand. Upon the entreaties of the bearer, he kept it, but wrote on the spot to Madame de Boufflers that it

\* Voltaire was in the habit of sending off several letters at the same time.



was the last which he would accept. Remark that a few days before, he had received a visit from the prince himself, of which he appeared to me excessively proud, in spite of all his disdain. He spoke to me a dozen times of his *misfortunes*, and a dozen times I tried in vain to make him tell me a little what he meant by it. The Luxemburg people redouble their attentions. The Hermitage is charming; it is the hermit who is crazy. All his good sense is transformed into genius, and slips away at the point of his pen. He will soon not have a grain left. He sees enemies everywhere, traps everywhere, calumniators everywhere. I thought myself the last person of whom he could be distrustful. Not at all. He received me almost rudely. I have been concerned, he gave me to understand, and that with his Therese, in certain plots against him. I thought at first that he meant some plots against his domestic peace, an odd enough idea, when one has a wife who looks as she does, and who is above all, so witty; but no, it was not even that. What was it then, pray? You know as well as I do.\* The plots made against him vanish like his misfortunes, as soon as you insist upon his explaining them. I reasoned with him as well as I could. He allowed me to talk until I had finished all I had to say, and then began again, as if I had not said a word. I compared him in my own mind to those people who always think that there is a robber concealed under their bed. They look,—no robber. They go away,—the robber is back again. In the meantime he is profoundly miserable, and will constantly become more so.”

“So much the worse for him,” said Diderot abruptly.

“You do not like him much, Diderot,” resumed d’Holbach, “and he returns the compliment; but we should all be wrong,

\* In spite of the *Confessions*, no historian has ever succeeded in explaining the rupture of Rousseau with d’Holbach and so many others.

I think all equally wrong, to regulate our feelings by his. *So much the worse for him!* you said. Well, the more I study him, the more I am assured that we cannot with justice blame him either for his griefs or his faults. He is a sick man, a child."

"A child who thinks himself the only reasonable being in the world."

"Oh! as for that it is true. Never was any man, beneath the humblest exterior, more imperturbably self-satisfied. Others have been as much so, but at least because they believe themselves to be good and clever. But he, in order to tell you that he is the best of men, must begin by relating to you a parcel of turpitudes, which he confesses and exaggerates, and of which at length he accuses himself, with the fervor of a Trappist. His life, he says, has been but one tissue of mistakes; try to save him from making another, and he will resist like a man convinced that he never has made one, and is incapable of doing so. The only way of standing well with him, at least for a few days, is to furnish him with an opportunity of playing the generous. You, for instance, Diderot, he detested yesterday a little less than usual. Do you know why? Duchesne the bookseller sent him the *Philosophers*, in which Palissot tears you to pieces and spares him, Rousseau, in quite a marked manner. Thereupon he expressed great indignation that any one could have believed that he would be flattered to see himself spared at your expense. He replied to Duchesne that he would not accept his *horrible* present; that he had had the *honor* to be your friend; that he could never take pleasure in seeing a *respectable* man calumniated. So far as I know, Morellet, he has never yet said any bad of you, but since he contributed to your release from the Bastile,\* you are

\* Through the mediation of the Maréchale de Luxembourg.

in his eyes the most virtuous and interesting of men. Do him a service, and he will instantly distrust you. Release him from the Bastile,—if he should happen to be sent there,—and you are his enemy ; for the greater the service, the less he will be able to persuade himself that it was rendered disinterestedly.”

“He is a paradox incarnate,” said Morellet. “One is ready to ask at every line, whether one is dealing with the most lying or the most sincere of mankind.”

“If sincerity,” said Helvétius, consists in being *actually* convinced at the moment, of the truth advanced, then I think there is no one more sincere than he ; if we are only to bestow the name upon one who begins by interrogating himself, in order to see if he really possesses the conviction which he is going to put forth, then I must boldly say that he is not sincere. All that he says, he thinks true ; but as for asking himself seriously why,—it is a thing he has never done. Thus it is that he has been able to defend, with equal sincerity, the most contradictory things ; thus it is, that all parties can procure weapons from him. His conviction, an entirely instructive one, forms itself from page to page ; it remains full and sincere, even when he is going to combat what he has once upheld. From the time he first wrote, what has he done ? You know the story. His eye falls, by accident, upon a question in the *Mercury*, proposed by the academy of Dijon : “Has the progress of science and the arts contributed to corrupt or to improve morals ?” He decides to enter into the competition. He becomes enthusiastic ; he has already sketched in his mind a magnificent picture of the benefits of civilization. He flies to a friend ; he excitedly describes to him his subject, his plan. ‘It is the asses’ bridge,’ says the friend. ‘Take the opposite theory, and you will see what a fine sensation you

will make!" A new flash! And now he violently attacked the notion he had at first intended to support. The friend was yourself, Diderot."

"It was I. As you say, I had scarcely got the words out, before he was just as much convinced, just as full of enthusiasm as he had been before; just as ready to say *black* as he had been to say *white*."

"But," said d'Holbach, "he denied the story to me."

"He lied!" cried Diderot.

"Hush! hush!" said Helvétius. "We know very well that the story is true. He allowed you to relate it for ten years without dreaming of contradicting you."

"And he dares—"

"Hush! I tell you. Is he a man at whom one can be angry?"

"But if he lies,—it is necessary—"

"To prove it to him? You would not succeed. Remember what I was saying just now. If he has got so far as to deny the thing, it is because he has got so far as not to believe it. Blame his imagination, if you will, but not his heart."

It was thus that Helvétius was accustomed to explain the errors of Rousseau. Is this system applicable to all the circumstances of his life and writings? Let others decide.

As to the story in question, we confess that it appears to us impossible to doubt it. The Memoirs of Marmontel, and more particularly of Morellet, so grave and impartial in his later years, amply counterbalance the tardy denial of Rousseau.

## XIX.

THE ENCYCLOPEDISTS OBSERVE THE AUTO-DA-FÉ FROM A DISTANCE.

The hour drew near.

"See, gentlemen," said Helvétius, "they have come to build the funeral pyre. You know we promised ourselves the pleasure of being at table."

Many drew near the window.

"Not so near," he said,— "not so near, gentlemen! One of these bailiffs need only raise his eyes, and—"

"And he would see us," said Morellet. "Well, what then?"

"What then? Why, you might be sent back where you have just come from, Seigneur *Mords-les*." (*Morellet, bite them.\**)

"Silence!" cried Damilaville. "The court enters!"

"Oh no!" said the abbé; "the court comes out."

And, in fact, the two councillors appeared at the top of the grand staircase.

"Take your seats, then," said Helvétius.

And they did so. Damilaville, who sat near the window, could, while eating, have an eye upon what took place.

"Attention!" he said. "They are going to commence. But see! there is one vacant place. Who is still absent?"

"You know Grimm always comes last," said Marmontel.

"He must have time to run about after news."

"Or time to arrange his wig."

He was, in fact, extremely particular about it.

"Or time to be seen by the ladies."

"Or time not to be seen by his creditors."

"Or time—"

\* The pun was one of Voltaire's. The fiery abbé proved the justice of it constantly.

"Gentlemen," said Helvétius, raising his glass, "to the health of the parliament!"

"To the health of the parliament!" repeated all the guests. And the glasses rang, and laughs and jests went round.

"Good!" said Morellet, "good! Health, *sanitas*, which means good sense also, which I wish our gentlemen with all my heart. *Mens sana in corpore sano.*"

"What are they about, Damilaville?"

"The bailiff is reading. Ah! he has finished the first decree. Samson tears a book."

"Which one?"

"Do you think I can see from here?"

"Is it thick or thin, large or small?"

"It burns. But it is too far off. If I had Grimm's glass—"

"What for?" said Grimm. "My glass? What for?"

"Ah! here you are at last! Give him your glass, and sit down."

"Let me at least take a look."

"Do so."

"Have they burned many yet?"

"They are just tearing the second."

"Try to see when my turn comes," said Helvétius.

"Yes, I see now. Ha! who is that priest who has just made his appearance on the stairs? Ah! it is my man of Versailles, —it is Father Bridaine."

Everybody, upon hearing this, ran to the window; for the occurrence at Versailles had made a prodigious sensation. They passed around the glass, in order to see him better. They made a hundred remarks on his figure, his manner, his dress.

In the meantime, the bailiff was reading, the hangman burning. Damilaville had promised to notify Helvétius. He hoped to recognize the book from its shape and binding.

While waiting,—for they had re-seated themselves at table,



—they related to each other many traits, more or less authentic, which have since taken their places in the biographies of Bridaine.

“One day,” said Grimm, “when he was heading a procession, he suddenly stopped, and mounting on a stone, began, ‘I am going to take you to your home.’ They followed him, and he conducted them to a cemetery.”

“He is constantly doing such things,” said Raynal. “There is not a sermon into which he does not contrive to put something new, piquant, or extraordinary, in order to arouse people’s attention. I often heard him at Pézenas.”

“What is Pézenas?” said d’Holbach.

“It is the province of my birth, Monsieur.”

“And of your *assent* (accent), probably.”

“Alas!”

He had often groaned over this unlucky accent, half Gascon, half Languedocian, which had closed the career of the pulpit for him. “I did not preach badly,” he used to say,—“but I had a devilish *assent*.” Upon what little things, much often depends! Without this accent, he would have devoted himself to the pulpit; he would have had success, great perhaps, for he possessed all the means of gaining it. Born at Paris, Raynal would have become a bishop; born at Pézenas, he became an encyclopedist.

“Nothing could have been more curious,” he resumed, “than the first appearance of Father Bridaine at Aigues-Mortes, nearly forty years ago. The people had counted upon I do not know what celebrated preacher for their Lent sermons. When *lie* was seen to appear, unknown and insignificant enough in appearance, they plotted together not to go and hear him. On Ash Wednesday, he enters the pulpit. The church empty. He takes a bell, and goes walking about, ringing and ringing, through all the streets of the city. All Aigues-Mortes is

presently at his heels. He re-enters the church, ascends the pulpit, and, with his resounding voice, begins a chant upon death. The people laugh; he goes on his way. One by one the people cease laughing. They listen; at length they tremble; for he has set to work to paraphrase his chant, and pours forth a torrent of images which must terrify the most hardened. His reputation was made."

"I would not be surprised," said some one, "if Father Bridaine should become—if he is not so already—one of those men who live in the imaginations of the people, and whose history, while they still live, is full of traditions."

"In that case," said d'Alembert, "he would be so in common with a man to whom he certainly does not suspect that he bears a resemblance,—him whom you saw at my house last week, Rabaut. He returned to visit me again. I induced him to give me a few more details in regard to the position which he holds among his people. He is really, for these poor people, the hero of an epic. He has constantly to resist the honors which they wish to pay him, and the inclination which they have to give him all the rights of the leader of a party. If he had encouraged them a little, he would have been so long ago. Last year, when our great generals allowed themselves to be beaten, and France could scarcely defend herself on the north, Rabaut need but have willed in order to raise the whole of the Southern provinces, and to rebel, at the head of one hundred thousand men, against the abominable oppression of the Protestants. It must—"

"I think we are ready, gentlemen," interrupted Damiaville. "I recognize the book. They are beginning to read the decree."

"Pass me the glass, gentlemen," said Helvétius. "Yes—That is it—I recognize myself."

His hand trembled. He saw that they perceived his emotion.

Helvétius had relied too much on his strength. In reality, we should say that it was because he did not depend upon it, that he had done so much to drown thought. He had played a part. He thought he should make it easier by selecting the most insolent. The mask fell off in spite of him.

“You smile, Diderot?” he said. “Smile. I should do as much in your place. You know whether I am afraid of that fire yonder. But there is one to whom all this is terrible. One who weeps, Diderot, while we are laughing here. This one—”

“It is his mother,” they murmured.

“It is my mother. Because the cause of her grief is—is absurd, shall I not feel a deep pity for it?”

He knew that his mother had gone to pass in a church, this hour, the prospect of which had tormented her for a year. He saw her on her knees praying for him.

They smiled no more. Diderot alone remained sullen. He did not comprehend why the sacred interests of philosophy should not take precedence everywhere and in everything of the old-fashioned feelings of nature and the old-fashioned prejudices of religion. Moreover, this was not the first time he had accused Helvétius of only knowing how to be courageous with the pen in his hand. He looked upon him, like Malesherbes and Buffon, as too much of a gentleman and too rich to be a true philosopher; he liked not that any of them should put on their gloves in order to crush the wretch, and in regard to this extensive cultivation of the old soil of Saint Louis, he would have willingly said, parodying the words of Christ; “whosoever putteth his hand to the plough and looketh behind him, is not worthy to enter the kingdom of reason.”

He looked out again. But as they could still hear nothing, he said,

“I should like very much to read this decree.”

“Wait,” said Grimm, “I got a copy of it. See also—”

“What is this!” cried Diderot. ‘*Recantation which Sièur Helvétius deposited in the registry of the Court!*’”

“Read it,” cried some.

“No, no!” said some others who appeared to have seen it already, and to have little desire that it should be more widely known.

But Diderot read;

“‘I have not wished to attack any of the truths of Christianity, which I profess sincerely in all the strictness of its doctrines and practice, and to which I glory in submitting all my thoughts, all my opinions, and all the faculties of my being, certain that all that is not in conformity with its spirit, cannot be truth. These are my true sentiments. I have lived, I shall live and die maintaining them.’”

Diderot, while reading these lines, had interrupted himself two or three times, half suffocated with indignation, and in part from hesitation to believe that the thing was authentic.\* But Helvétius sat immovable, with his eyes cast down; he evidently confessed. Diderot contained himself; but he was not a man to do so long. He had thrown away the paper; his lips quivered. “A recantation,” he muttered; “a recantation!” Then growing excited: “when do they expect this old idol to fall, when it has but to frown, in order to prostrate them at its feet? A recantation!” And suddenly springing to the window, he cried;

“Bravo! gentlemen, bravo! Burn, burn—since there are still people who are afraid of your flames.”

It was then that he had been seen, leaning out of the window, clapping his hands, and resisting, like a madman, all efforts to drag him back.

\* † is authentic. We have not changed a single word.

## XX.

## RECANTATIONS OF THE INFIDELS.

The tears of his mother, the advice of pious and prudent friends, and the indignation of the queen and the dauphin, had determined Helvétius upon this strange proceeding.

Strange indeed would be the history of all the recantations thus extorted from the infidelity of the last century. It is impossible to know which most to wonder at, the foolishness of those who exacted them, or the dishonesty of those who dared to sign them.

Voltaire, the first to attack, was also the first to recant. He did not even wait to be forced to it; he amused himself by being beforehand. He thought it an excellent jest to scoff at all those whose belief he had already scoffed at, by denying his sarcasms, crying out against his calumniators, and professing to be the most devout of believers. See his letters. If those were collected in which he plays the Christian, there would be enough to make a volume. Did he hope to deceive by these? Perhaps so at the outset; afterwards he knew that no one believed a word of them. But after all, what mattered it to him whether he was believed or not? "If I had one hundred thousand men," he writes to the count d'Argental, "I know very well what I would do; but as I have not, I shall commune at Easter, and you may call me hypocrite as much as you will." If he was taken ill, he confessed. If serious threats are made, he will play the sick man in order to have an opportunity to confess. If a stranger comes, of high rank, but religious, who appears to wish to hear his profession of faith, see what he will write him :\*

"The great Corneille was obliged to reply to his enemies, that he submitted all his writings to the judgment of the Church.

\* Letter to the marquis Albergati Capacelli, senator of Bologna, 1760

“I say the same thing, and it is a pleasure to me, to say it to a senator of the second city in the States of the holy Father; and it is delightful for me to say it upon an estate so near to the possessions of the heretics as mine are. The more I am filled with charity for their persons, and indulgence for their errors, the firmer I am in my faith—etc., etc.”

Thus spoke the master; and thus spoke the disciples without scruple, if the weather was a little stormy, and the Bastille appeared to prepare for new guests.

This insincerity was nevertheless too common for us to appreciate it with entire justice. It was somewhat with recantations of this kind, as with forms of politeness. They had, so to speak, passed into the language; each one knew perfectly well, what allowances were to be made. To protest that a man was submissive to the Church, was in the eyes of people in general, no more extraordinary than to call one's self in a letter, the *obedient servant* of one's inferior, or to assure one's *respect* and *consideration* to a man generally despised. You may have seen caricatures, of a man who makes apologies to his adversary, saying innocently, that in insulting him, even in boxing his ears, he had no intention of offending him. Thus acted many people in this vast combat between intoxicated reason and religion degraded. Thus had Helvétius acted, and Diderot must be looked upon as brutal, as a Diogenes, for having taken upon him to think that an infidel lies when he asserts that he is a Christian!

## XXI.

### WANT OF CANDOR OF AUTHIORS OF THE PRESENT DAY.

Those falsehoods have not ended with the despotism which served as their excuse. You will find them still under a



taousand forms in books, in newspapers, and in the language and usages of the present day.

These forms may be reduced however to two; the Christian falsehood, and the Catholic falsehood.

The Christian falsehood, is that varnish of Christianity which is unscrupulously thrown, at the present day, over so many ideas more or less immoral, sentiments more or less false, and theories more or less dangerous. There is in this, it is not to be denied, a certain homage paid to the divinity,—or at least to the beauty of Christianity. Very few books now breathe that brutal antagonism, that deep hatred, by which it was formerly considered good taste to distinguish one's self; reserving the privilege indeed, if *Messieurs* should be angry at it, of writing that there had been no intention to attack any of the truths of religion. Our authors generally try to avoid any reproach of this kind. Instead of waiting for Christianity to be invoked against them, they invoke it themselves; and that which they dare not put forth in opposition to it, they hasten to place under its protection. They no longer assert, at the commencement of an infidel book, that they intend living and dying in the faith, but they will take care, as they go on their way, to scatter about just enough religious words and expressions to delude the ignorant,—and the ignorant in matters concerning religion, as we have already said, are the great majority of mankind, including often those who are the most conscientious and able in regard to all other matters.

And this, as we have already observed elsewhere, causes the success of the second, which we have called the Catholic falsehood. The ignorance of the age in religious matters is nowhere more striking than in the facility with which people pass from one to the other of these.

If our authors are many of them not Christians, they are evidently still less Catholics; if they only accept with privilege

of choice the simplest and most explicit teachings of Christianity, still more largely do they claim the right of choosing among those of the Church. And yet this Church, to which in fact they refuse all authority, this church to which they are perfectly well aware that they do not belong, that they never did belong, that they cannot belong without denying all that they have written; this Church whose pretensions, in short, they know, and which they would deny with scorn if she should attempt to exercise them in regard to them,—this Church receives from them, as they pass on, a thousand little marks of respect; they flatter her as if they feared her, praise her as if they esteemed her, authorize her, in a word, to look upon them as her children and champions.

Accordingly, there are now seen no more of those grossly false recantations formerly forced from fear; but in their stead a thousand recantations in detail, a thousand falsehoods which the Church finds still more to her advantage, because their falsity is less apparent, and because the authors themselves, the greater part of the time, do not pay enough attention to the matter to see that they are falsifying. How many fine things, for example, do we not hear, in regard to unity! And yet, among those who laud it, who openly assert that it is the first characteristic of a true and holy Church, how many do you find who contribute to this unity? How many who are really in subjection to the laws which establish it in appearance? How many who would remain submissive if the application of these laws to them should be attempted?

The Church in fact takes good care not to attempt this; but at the bottom of this toleration there is the same principle which formerly inspired her severities. For a long time she burnt unorthodox authors, and thanks to the Church this custom had so thoroughly entered into the customs of Christian nations, that the Protestants themselves took some little time

to get rid of it. After awhile the books only were burned; the authors escaped all pursuit by means of a few words of recantation. At length they no longer burned either authors or books; it was for the authors to decide what they would offer as their ransom. In an age of liberty it was the best and only method of obtaining anything more from them. Well, this Church, now so accommodating, but so savagely exacting, as long as she had it in her power to be so, is still the same; this velvet hand which she now extends to you, is the same iron one which would have cast you into the flames. The same principle lies beneath her present indulgence and her rigors of former days;—unity at all risks. She knew that she did not convert the people whom she used to burn, or whom she forced to recant; and she knows well that the people whom she allows to say or think that they are her children, are *not* so. In both cases, accordingly, what she desired above all was fair appearance. In spite of the words of Christ, her kingdom is essentially of this world. It is her chief glory, and it will be her chief punishment.

## XXII.

HELVÉTIUS BECOMES THOUGHTFUL.—SAD DISCOVERY CAUSING  
SERIOUS REFLECTIONS.

“But you are crazy! Diderot!” cried all the guests.

“Ah!” he cried, when they had dragged him away from the window; “ah! you must tamper with the wretch! You wish to restore her strength to her, and show her that she is very kind not to burn anything more than paper! Very good, gentlemen, very good! But I shall not do it! I shall have nothing to do with it, I swear! Recantations! Recantations!”

And he had already reached the stairs. They endeavored, but in vain, to retain him.

“Let him go,” said Helvétius. “Let his anger pass. I was wrong—”

“Wrong in what?” asked Grimm.

“Oh! to pour him out three or four glasses of champagne,” said Morellet. “Was not that what you were going to say?”

But Helvétius was still thoughtful.

“A fine commotion,” said Raynal.

“And a breakfast finely interrupted,” added doctor Roux, who had not left his place.

“The thing is done!” said Damilaville. “The fire is going out. Peace to your ashes!—Ah! another decree?”

It was the one which we have already laid before the reader. It may be remembered that the bailiff found his voice. He was very distinctly heard.

“Protestants?” said Helvétius, sadly. “They do not recant,—the Protestants!”

“Diderot would tell you,” said d’Holbach, “that it is because they are neither farmers of the revenues, nor masters of the queen’s household.”

“He would perhaps be right. But no. If they do not recant, it is because they believe. We only think of man, and we recant; but they think of God, and they stand firm. But listen—‘Books found in the hands of Dumont. Fifteen hundred livres fine, of which one-third falls to the informant,—*who has requested not to be named*—’ Ah! Good Heavens!”

“That does look badly enough,” said d’Alembert. “The third of fifteen hundred livres is five hundred,—just what your *brave lad*, the clerk at Dumont’s, has received from his pretended cousin. Another lesson, my dear philosopher! You have prepared this little nest for a viper. What! you are cast down! Did you think that your charities were never bestowed upon any but good people?”

“No; but—”

He hesitated.

“But what?”

“Gentlemen,” interrupted Grimm, “I forgot to tell you, apropos to Father Bridaine, that he is to preach on Monday at Saint-Sulpice. All Paris will be there.”

“And all Versailles,” added Damilaville.

“Shall we go?”

“Why not?”

“It is understood, then. Who will bring Diderot?”

“I will take it upon me,” said Morellet.

“Good. It will suit him, since he belongs to the trade.”

“To the trade? Diderot?”

The story of the six sermons was related. Grimm added the account of the journey to Meaux, and the visit to the bishop.

The books were still burning. Puffs of smoke came from time to time through the window. They closed it, and went on talking.

But nothing could amuse Helvétius. He hardly listened, and scarcely answered. They at length went away, and he was left alone with d’Alembert.

“But what is the matter with you?” said the latter. “You must have been very much interested in this young man, since you are so troubled at having discovered—”

“I myself, d’Alembert, am the guilty one.”

“You?”

“This young man, a year ago, was a model of fidelity. I was so unfortunate as to lend him my book.”

“Your book? Well, in that you advocate nothing but virtue, disinterestedness, honesty.”

Helvétius shook his head.

“Virtue—virtue. Yes, in fact, this word occurs very often in the book. It remains to be seen whether, with our principles, it can be anything more than a word.”

“These are scruples—”

“Too well founded, d’Alembert. This young man believed in God; he does so no longer.”

“It is not your fault, then. You do not teach atheism.”

“Not entirely. But it might be questioned whether, in our systems, God is really anything more than a word. As for myself, I have more than once confessed to myself, while writing, that if I spoke of Him, it was—what shall I call it?—from complaisance, from politeness, as it were. God, you see, is necessarily all or nothing. If it is not He who moves the car, He is nothing more than a fifth wheel. Well, in spite of all our fine speeches, we reduce Him to this lowest position. So long as we only theorize, we may deceive ourselves in respect to this: it may be fancied, if our tirades are believed, that we believe in God. But let an opportunity come for acting as if we did not believe in Him, and see then what will happen.”

“*Messieurs* of the parliament,” said d’Alembert, “would doubtless be agreeably surprised if they learned that their decree had led you to make such reflections.”

“I am not one of those,” resumed Helvétius, “who think that a book is good, only because it is condemned to be burned. Besides, as you have seen, it is not the condemnation of the parliament which has caused these sad reflections; it is another condemnation much more conclusive, which this wretched man has pronounced by showing the effects which the reading of my book has produced upon him. D’Alembert, you talk in vain. This is a worse chastisement than all the censures and decrees in the world. If this God whom we dethrone really exists, do you know what would be the best thing He could do to punish us?” “Well—what?”

“To allow us to live another century, and to make us assist in harvesting the tempests which we are now sowing.”



## XXIII.

## NOBLE CAREER OF ANTOINE COURT.

Let us accompany Bridaine in his visit to him who was mentioned by the Cevenol as the friend of Rabaut.

Being ignorant of his address, he thought he might procure it from the door-keeper of the Academy of Inscriptions. He did so. Gebelin lived in the Rue des Menestriers.

Court de Gebelin had been for some time the central agent of the French Protestants. A singular toleration had allowed him to take this title almost officially. The Protestants, according to the last edicts of Louis XIV., were no longer even rebels for whom pardon might be demanded; *they no longer existed*; their name was banished from the official decrees;\*—and yet at Paris, at Versailles, in the ministerial offices, in the saloons, everywhere, a man was allowed to go about unceasingly, with their grievances in his mouth, and their petitions in his hand.

This single fact is enough to show how undecided and desultory was the despotism of this epoch. At the very time when the most atrocious severities in the provinces sullied those who instigated them, the man who passed his life in

\* They were called *new converts*. We shall see further on what this signified, and what an infernal meaning had been given to the word.

branding them was allowed to have his liberty in the midst of the capital. The very name *Gebelin*, a protest against the barbarous laws which oppressed his brethren in the faith, was only one of the surnames which had aided his father, Antoine Court, to elude the blood-hounds of the great king.

Antoine Court! Another of those men who need only have been placed in another sphere, in order to be universally counted among the illustrious of their day, and the regenerators of their country.

It was in 1713. Languedoc, after all the ravages of the Camisard war, had borne its share of the general calamities. To the rigors of oppression were added those of the disastrous winter of 1709. Levies of troops and enormous contributions had been exacted from this unhappy country. It might have drawn tears of blood from those who had seen it before the revocation of the edict of Nantes.

That which distressed them more than anything else, was the internal state of the few remains of their churches. No longer was there any organization, nor were there consistories, nor pastors. War and persecution had broken, annihilated all. Among the unfortunates who vegetated upon this soil crimsoned with the blood of their brethren, were some who resigned all hope, and waited for rest in death alone; while others gave themselves up to all the aberrations of a fanaticism more fatal than persecution itself. Prophets and prophetesses, poor creatures crazed by the magnitude of their perils, seriously compromised the solemn heritage of Saurin, Jurieu and Claude. Disorder and ridicule threatened to finish what the fire and sword had spared.

Such was the chaos in the midst of which we perceive the appearance of Antoine Court. He is not eighteen years of age, and his plan is already formed. He will gather together these

scattered remains. He will appoint himself aids. He will excite some, and calm others. He will go to the desert and set up that pulpit which has been torn from the churches; he will ascend it, calm and discreet, and religion shall no longer speak any but a language worthy of her. He will have consistories with their elders, their deacons, their pastors regularly installed; there shall again be seen conferences and synods; in short, all the former Church, in form and principles, zeal and order, discipline and faith, shall reappear. And that which others would not venture to attempt in times of peace, with the aid and approbation of the powerful of this world, he will undertake, he, hunted, outlawed, without other support than his faith, without other aid than that of God.

Thus planned and thus performed Antoine Court. We shall not follow him through the details of his long and laborious career. Of the five pastors who had in 1717 signed with him the report of the first synod held under his direction, *four*,\* within a few years, had perished on the scaffold; but on the other hand, towards 1744, in the same places where he had at first had so much trouble to assemble fifteen, thirty, an hundred persons,—there were now held meetings of five thousand, of eight thousand, to whom he had the joy of preaching, or of hearing Rabaut preach. He had been at first the only pastor; he left sixty.

Enthusiasm has more than once, in a shorter period, produced more striking results; but the carrying on during thirty years, step by step, in the midst of unceasing perils, without appealing to enthusiasm in the beginning, but on the contrary repressing it,—of so great and so difficult a reorganization,—is a miracle of perseverance and courage such as history has seldom, perhaps never, been called upon to record.

\* Hue, Vesson, Arnaud, and Durand.

## XXIV.

## LITERARY LABORS OF COURT DE GEBELIN.

Court died in 1760. Early worn out by the labors of this fearful mission, he had gone to Lausanne to place himself at the head of a seminary in that place, founded by him about 1725, with the aid of a few foreign sovereigns.

The archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Wake, and the celebrated Alphonse Turretin, professor at Geneva, had actively assisted in the founding of this establishment. There, went on in silence, the work which Louis XIV. believed buried beneath the ruins of the schools of Saumur and of Sedan; there were gathered together from all parts of the kingdom, those who were conscious, as Court said, of the vocation of martyrs. There his son had studied,—he whom we now perceive established at Paris; there, at this time, was the eldest son of Rabaut, afterwards known by the name of Saint-Etienne,—who was one day to perish on a different scaffold from that which his father had braved.

Heir to these glorious traditions, Court de Gebelin had, however, not taken an active share in the ministry. Not because he did not feel as much as any of the others, and even more, the vocation exacted by his father. Before quitting Lausanne, he had joyfully received his qualification for the gallows, as it was called. But from his youth he had been remarkable for talents so uncommon, that the most zealous hesitated to place such a stake on the fearful risks of the Protestant apostleship. It was perceived that his place was in the centre, that in that position he could be of great service, and there had been but one opinion in regard to his deciding upon it. A general tour

throughout the provinces had made him acquainted with their sufferings, their necessities, their wishes. Rabaut was to be the bishop, as he had already been for a long time, and Court the minister of the forms of worship.

Let us visit him in his house in the Rue des Menestriers, where we shall soon see Bridaine make his appearance.

We are in his study. At first view, we might suppose ourselves again in that of d'Alembert. But let us approach. Never has such a medley of work and business offered itself to our observation.

Court is seated before a large table, upon which are piled books of every shape, and letters in every imaginable hand; a vast chaos in which you will never see him lose himself or even hesitate for a moment. Two different sheets of paper are before him, upon both of which he has begun to write. One is a petition to the Count de Saint-Florentin,\* the other a memorial to the president Des Brosses. "Yes, Monsieur," he writes in the latter, "I have found more than three hundred French words which are indisputably derived from the Arabic,—"  
"Yes, Monsieur," he writes in the former, "it is now two years since Fabre was sent to the galleys on account of an action for which in ancient times he would have been crowned." He adds a sentence to one, and a sentence to the other, which does not prevent him, as he goes on, from thinking of this and that other work, which he also has on hand, and which he suddenly goes to look for, in some drawer, in order to change a word, or add some note or detail. You fancy that these two closed books upon which he rests his elbow, are to aid him in the

\* Minister of the king's household, and charged, from this title, with all that concerned the Protestants. The persecution was set down in the list of the king's private affairs, as if it were feared that the glory of it would otherwise not be sufficiently ascribed to him.

same researches? No, one is the polyglott of Alcalá, quite surprised to see itself in heretic hands; the other is the *Martyrology* of Crespin, that sombre legend of French protestantism. There are scarcely a dozen copies of it left in the kingdom, it has been so hunted after, and so many have been burned! There, are the ancients, opened in many places; there, quite recent works, in which his searching pencil has already noted many a page. Here is the *Worship of Fetich Deities*, by president des Brosses; here the *History of Yemen*, and the *Table of Arabic Kings*, by the marquis de Bréquigny; here the *Explanation of the Mosaic of Palestrina*, by the abbé Arnaud; here a *Treatise on Mathematical Infinitude*, by the Genevese Achard, judge at Berlin; here a memorial on the Chinese, by Monsieur de Guignes, of the Academy of Inscriptions; here an answer to the memorial, *Doubts*, by Deshautesraies; here a *Theory of Taxes*, for which its author, the marquis de Mirabeau, is at this moment under lock and key; here the *History of Wigs*, by Thiers, a doctor of theology, with Greek and Hebrew quotations; here, in a word is all that the first six months of 1760 have produced of archæological labors, and learned novelties. But whilst the age has become learned in order to amuse itself, in order to fill by means of labors of the head, that vacuum which departed faith has left in the heart,—he, a man of faith above all, brings his tablet to the temple of science, because he wishes that it may be a temple to God.



## XXV.

OPBELIN AND THE BOOKSELLER.—GREAT DIFFICULTY WITH WHICH THE HUGUENOTS WERE ABLE TO PRESERVE THEIR BIBLES AND RELIGIOUS BOOKS.

He has finished writing, and rises.

“Eleven o’clock, already, and I have not yet received my letters. And Rabaut does not return.”

He walked up and down the room a moment, with his arms folded.

“Here he is, I believe—Ah! it is you, Dumont—”

“Ah! Monsieur—”

“Did you go to see the burning?”

“Ah! Monsieur, do not jest. Do you know who it was that betrayed us? My clerk—”

“The protégé of Monsieur Helvétius?”

“The same.”

“How did you discover it?”

“It would be a long story; but the thing is certain, too certain. He confesses, for that matter.

“You have turned him off?”

“Certainly; but what is to be gained by it? I shall be watched now.”

“They have other things to do, Dumont. I am going to see these gentlemen, besides; I wish to make them feel a little ashamed of their decree.”

“Good. But the fine, in the meantime? I have advanced it, you know.”

“The fine? I shall of course repay you—as soon as I can. Just at present I have not a crown. I have sent off within the last few days all the funds I had left. Two hundred livres to

the galleys at Toulon; two hundred to those at Marseilles, and one hundred to our prisoners of Aignes Mortes. All together just what this miserable clerk received! How bad laws instigate bad actions! If the privilege of remaining unknown had not been offered him, would he have dreamed of betraying us? And this fine, for his profit! The time will come when it will be asked how there ever could have existed such immoral laws, or judges who did not recoil before the immorality of executing them. But after all, thank God, they did not find a great deal—”

“Not one quarter of what I had in my back shop. Now everything is in the cellar. If they come back—”

“They will not come back. There remain—”

“One hundred Bibles, I believe, and eight hundred New Testaments. As for catechisms, there are perhaps three thousand, besides the psalm books and the collections of prayers.”

“Nearly as many, in fact, as were seized two years ago, with Jean Carbière, at Bordeaux. That was a fire, Dumont!\* Compared with that, what was the affair of this morning? We are rich.”

“With a buried treasure.”

“Buried, indeed, since it is in your cellar. It must be taken out of there, however. On all sides I am now asked for books. In Guyenne, since the great burning at Bordeaux, they do not know where to get any. In Bearn, in Poitou, in Dauphiny, the pastors lament that they receive so few. At Nîmes, the dépôts will soon be exhausted. Happily it is the season for the fair of Beaucaire. All my measures are taken. In a month, Dumont, your cellar is empty.”

“God grant it!”

\* About sixteen thousand volumes were burned at Bordeaux, the 17th of April, 1758.

“He will grant it. Here are my letters, I believe. There ought to be replies upon this very subject.”

The fair of Beaucaire had many a time come in season to aid the spiritual purveyors of the Protestants of the South. During this great transportation of people and goods, pastors and books could circulate with a little less danger. Rabaut had even adopted sometimes, upon these occasions, the character of a *merchant of fine pearls*, doubtless in innocent allusion to the *pearl of great price*, under which emblem, the Bible has designated itself. It was true, that even at Beaucaire, in 1735, there had been an auto-da-fé almost equal to that at Bordeaux; but these checks, very rare, moreover, only served to call forth the invention of new methods of transportation.

The books generally came from Holland through Paris, and from Geneva through Lyons or Grenoble. In all the cities there were merchants who could be depended upon, and who acted as intermediaries. Inside of bales of goods, and in cases and barrels of provisions, sometimes without any other precaution than a thick envelope and a false label, thousands of volumes went from North to South, from East to West, from the free to their oppressed brethren. But in the midst of these courageous frauds, Protestant authority was on the watch that nothing should be done save what necessity rendered legitimate. A decree of the synod of 1734, excommunicates whosoever should by fraud enter anything besides these religious books. Difficult as it was to procure a sufficient number of these, it was often still more so to preserve them. Various edicts, renewed in 1729, had commanded the seizure and destruction of all books employed by Protestants. In the first requisition it was enjoined upon them to bring these themselves; if not, an *arbitrary*\* fine, fixed upon them by the in-

\* This word is in the edict of 1729, and in almost all those which

tendant of the province. In case of a second offence, another arbitrary fine, but which must not be less than a third of the culprit's possession; finally, three years of banishment. All information was received; any consul of a commune, or any priest, might enter the houses and make the necessary search. It is by millions, therefore, that we must compute the volumes destroyed in conformity to these edicts; for instruction, the companion of the Reformation, had multiplied books among all ranks, throughout Protestant France. It was a sad day when the old family Bible must be given up, the book doubly revered, sacred because it was the Bible, and sacred from the recollections connected with it! Children, parents, grandparents, all, from their earliest years, had daily seen and touched it. It had been present, like the household deities of the ancients, at all the joys and all the sorrows of the family. A touching custom had inscribed on its first or its last leaves, sometimes even on the margin of its pages, the principal events in all these humble lives. In such a year, on such a day, a child was born,—and this child was perhaps the grandfather, even the great-grandfather, of the father or grandfather now living, for these Bibles dated for the most part from the earliest times of the Reformation. Then there were marriages, and baptisms, and deaths, and other births. And now all these pious monuments must perish at once in the flames!

speak of pecuniary penalties to be inflicted upon the Protestants. The right of confiscation, so odious even in the hands of princes or tribunals, existed, in fact, in those of the lowest intendants.

## XXVI.

## GEBELIN'S CORRESPONDENCE.

Court had just received his letters, through the hands of a confidential bearer. Two or three bore his address; the others had been received by different persons in Paris, for although the police appeared to close their eyes, it had been judged more prudent not to draw attention to his immense correspondence. There were also two for Rabaut,—for Monsieur Tuabar, for that it will be remembered, was his name when in Paris.

“Well, Dumont, what did I tell you?” cried Court, after having opened one by hazard. “See,—read. This, however, does not come very far. It is from my friend Delabroue, chaplain to the embassy from Holland. It is true that I wrote him yesterday.”

Dumont took the letter and read:

“I had not waited until I received your note, my dear friend and brother, in order to busy myself about the matter of which you speak. I wrote without delay to our friends in Holland, and I hope that they will soon collect the sum. But as the reply cannot be received for several days, I have contrived to procure the fifteen hundred livres, and you will receive them in the course of the day. May God send you no worse trial, and all will be well. Your friend and brother.

“P. S.—I have just put the finishing stroke to my work. The title embarrasses me a little. It will be, I think, *The Spirit of Jesus Christ in regard to Toleration*. What do you think of it?”

“I shall reflect upon it,” said Court. “In the meantime,

your fine is ready. Ah! some more money! But I expected this. The quarter day is here, and this is the addition to the salaries of the pastors which is sent by the committee at Geneva.”\*

“That is to be sent to Nîmes?” said the bookseller.

“To Nîmes, Alais and Toulouse. By the way, I have some one who takes the charge of sending it. It is a Genevese, named Necker, employed in the house of Thelusson, brothers.”

“The Necker who is said to be so intelligent?”

“Yes; a young man who will make his way. Ah! here is what I was looking for,—an excellent letter from Beaucaire. Take it. Everything is marked, I see; the addresses, the statements to be made. Good. Your cellar will be empty in a week, instead of a month, Master Dumont,—at least unless something arrives with which we must fill it again.”

He went away, half contented, half uneasy. He was one of those Protestants of which many were to be found in the large cities, Protestant enough at heart, but little desirous of compromising themselves. Shall we cast the first stone at them? Let us remember the difficulties of their position. The least infringement of an edict might be followed by terrible punishments. It was an indulgence that the parliament had not condemned Dumont to close his shop; and if they had had the slightest desire to send him to the galleys, they might easily have found more than one clause in these same edicts to which he could have found nothing to reply. Guillaume Issoire had been sent thither for having received barrels marked *Black and white peas*, which had been found full of Ostervald’s catechisms. Besides, Dumont passed for a Catholic. The forced

\* The salaries of the pastors were at this time from seven to eight hundred francs. The addition sent from Geneva was three hundred and fifty.



abjuration of his father had transmitted him this title, which he retained, like so many others, because he had need of it in order to live. If this was hypocrisy, whose fault was it? That of the unhappy creatures who submitted to it as to a disgrace, or of those who made it necessary for them to do so?

## XXVII.

RABAUT.—DISHONESTY OF THE ROMISH CHURCH.

Left alone, Court again went to his letters. He had before him a kind of registry, in which, as he went along, he wrote what he did not wish to forget.

“To write to Monsieur de Voltaire, in order that he shall interest himself for the galley slave, Chaumont of Geneva, condemned for life, in '51, by Monsieur de Saint-Priest, intendant of Languedoc, for having attended two meetings.”\*

“To see what has become of the petition of Jean Besson, of Alais, that he may be allowed to sell his house for 4,500 livres to Mark Ducros, of the same place.”†

“To reply to the abbé Barthelemy that I shall go and see him some of these days; that if I can aid him in decyphering the inscription, I shall do it with pleasure; that the word in question is not in the Polyglott, etc.”

“To write to Lausanne that pastor Campredon cannot remain alone in Normandy; that one or two colleagues must absolutely be found for him.”‡

\* Chaumont, for whom Voltaire wrote to the duke de Choiseul, was only liberated in 1764.

† Protestants were not allowed to sell houses and lands of more than three thousand francs value. Emigration was thus impossible for landholders, unless they abandoned everything.

‡ The churches in Normandy had only been reorganized towards 1744, by the pastor Viala.

“To send to Monsieur Quesnay,\* the commencement of my calculations in regard to the price of grain at Rome, at the end of the reign of Augustus.”

“Ah ha!” he murmured, opening the last letter, “here is the abbé de Caveirac, who is going to return to the charge! † He repents of having been too kind.”

“Come in, come in,” he continued, addressing himself to Rabaut, whose step he heard in an adjoining apartment,—“come and see how far the *fides romana* can carry a man.”

Rabaut entered. “What is it?” he asked.

“I am informed that there is a publication of the abbé de Caveirac, in which he pretends to prove that there were scarcely a thousand persons killed in Paris on Saint Bartholomew’s day.”

“A thousand? Oh, my dear friend, that is still quite reasonable. People have asserted to me that there were not five hundred killed, and two or three thousand, at the furthest, in the whole kingdom.”

“Why, they are crazy, these people! Who do they think will believe them?”

“Who? Ah, my poor friend, it is easy to see that you only live among the savants! They will be believed—by all whose interest it is to believe them; and the savants will at length believe it also. Has it not already been attempted to prove, in some histories, that the massacre of Saint Bartholomew was a purely political affair, merely a game, in which the Protestants had the ill luck to be neither the slyest nor the strongest? This excuse comes rather late. It would be curi-

\* The economist.

† He had published, in 1755, in answer to the memorial of Rippert de Monclar, a *Dissertation upon the Toleration of Protestants in France*. Two years afterwards, he had added to it a *Defence of Louis XIV.* and his council.

ous enough for the Roman Church to have bowed its head for nearly two hundred years beneath the infamy of such a recollection, if it had had any means of throwing it off. But now the career is open. The Saint Bartholomew massacre will, in fifty years, be nothing more than a mere riot, maliciously exaggerated by us; in an hundred years, it will be pure calumny against the good mother church."\*

"Probably; and doubtless calumny also, all that our descendants may say of our sufferings at the present day."

"Yes," resumed Rabaut; "if I had not a thousand other reasons for being persuaded that the Roman Church teaches error, its condemnation might be taken, in my opinion, from this frightful facility in lying. Not a month passes, not a week, that I am not obliged to take up my pen to combat the most absurd falsities. And it is not by the curés and monks only that these are circulated. The bishops, whom their position itself, in default of conscience, ought to render more careful, are only the bolder, as if they felt themselves placed too high for our denials ever to reach them. After your father had replied so well, in '52, to that famous letter † in which the

\* Bossuet has computed at six thousand, (of which at least five hundred were noblemen,) the number of deaths in Paris; and at twenty-five or thirty thousand those in the provinces. "The news of the massacre spread horror everywhere," he adds. "The hatred of heresy made them receive it with pleasure at Rome." He denied that there was any plot whatever on the part of the Protestants. "In order to impress the idea of a plot on all minds," he says, "public thanks were given to God, upon the pretended discovery. These shams imposed upon no one, and the action just committed was considered so much the more detestable by good people, because there had been no pretext found which had the least plausibility."

Bossuet, it may be seen, is much less anti-Protestant than certain writers and preachers of the present day.

† Letter to the comptroller-general, Monsieur de Machault, "Against

bishop of Agen, Monsieur de Chabannes, accuses us of rejoicing at the misfortunes of France, it seemed as if this accusation could never again be renewed. Well, in our provinces there is never a single mandate published against us in which it is not re-produced or insinuated. And this assertion, though it be false, does not rest, after all, on an absurd foundation; for it would not be strange if we had but little love for a country where we have suffered so much. But how many other accusations are there, entirely, impudently false, and invariably repeated in all the writings of these gentlemen! One only, the bishop of Nîmes,\* is an exception; and even he signaled himself sadly, at the time of the numerous re-baptizals in '52. As for the others, they put no restraint upon themselves; everything appears allowable. There is Monsieur de Montclus, bishop of Alais, who collects all that is related most disgraceful of Luther, Calvin, and all our reformers; or Monsieur de Saint-Jal, bishop of Castres, who accuses us of undermining the principles of morality, and authorizing debauchery and adultery; or Monsieur de Fontanges, bishop of Lavaur, who represents us as extending our hand to the infidels and the sacrilegious; or Monsieur de Crussol d'Uzès, bishop of La Rochelle, who thinks himself a great theologian, and who can not write a sentence against our doctrines without seasoning it with a falsehood against ourselves. So much for written lies. Elsewhere it is still worse. In the pulpit, in the schools, in families, in the confessional, everywhere that we cannot follow our enemies step by step, they scatter and perpetuate the most absurd prejudices. It is not the fault of the priests, if the people among whom we live—who can see and speak with us

*ne toleration of the Huguenots in the kingdom.*" It was upon this occasion that Antoine Court published his "*Impartial French Patriot.*"

\* Monsieur de Beedelievre.

every day—who have but to keep their eyes open, in short, to see what we are—do not look upon us as a kind of monster, scarcely belonging to the human race!”

## XXVIII.

### IS SHE ALTERED IN THIS RESPECT?

Did he exaggerate? Or was the picture correct in 1760, and would it be false at the present day?

It would be so undoubtedly in some points, in one especially.

If the Church were to be believed, it was for the interests of the throne that she exacted the destruction of the Protestants. There was not a mandate, not a memorial, in which their liberal ideas were not represented as deserving more than all else, to draw upon them the severities of royalty.

This is a source which is no longer at the present day open to their accusers. It would be re-opened without doubt, the day when we should again behold a Louis XIV. or a Louis XV. upon the throne; in the meantime, they profess democracy as loudly as possible. Protestants, accordingly, receive from their former oppressors, the permission to love liberty.

With this exception the old accusations go on their way; some just as they were formerly, others a little rejuvenated but all, or almost all, more audacious than ever.

## XXIX.

## GEBELIN'S GIGANTIC PLANS OF LITERARY LABOR.—THE PRISONERS OF AIGUES-MORTES.

“But enough of this,” resumed the minister. “I have just come from the Palace of Justice. I saw burned—you know what. I feel a longing to be with some one who can understand what I felt at such a sight.”

“Stay,” said Court, “while the fire was burning, I received another book which will perhaps also be burned by them, but which will be nevertheless an eternal witness against their Church and themselves. This is the first copy of the history so long promised us by my father,\* and the last pages of which he wrote only a few days before his death. I have still a precious manuscript, that of the *General History of the Protestants of France in their different places of refuge, since the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*. It contains a vast number of details which he alone could know, and which would be of the deepest interest to those families who have been broken up and scattered into exile. Unhappily these are merely notes, and they are still far from forming a book. I will finish it, if God spares my life.† It shall be the work of my old age.”

“Another!—You frighten me, Gebelin, with your plans. Man proposes—”

“And God disposes, I know. But God does not forbid us to *propose*, particularly when it is for his glory.”

“And who can tell us when it is really for his glory? Can

\* *History of the Disturbances in the Cevennes*, by Antoine Court.

† The work was never carried out, and the manuscript was lost at the death of Court.



we ever know whether we actually think of him at such times? I have trembled for you, I confess, when I saw you in such a whirl. Reputation and fortune are there at your door."

"Let them enter, Rabaut, and we shall see. I too, sometimes tremble. I also fear that I may forget God for myself."

"Courage, then! It is a proof that you do not forget him."

"God grant it! But before trembling for the consequences, I must tremble at the work itself. I have at length sketched the plan of the enormous work, about which I have sometimes spoken to you in my letters. There will be twenty volumes,—thirty, perhaps—"

"And you will call it?—"

"*The Primitive World analyzed and compared with the Modern.*"

"Let us hear the plan."

"In the first volume, I follow throughout the Greek and Eastern allegories, the generating principles of the ancient religions.

"The second is an Universal Grammar, followed by a theoretical explanation of the process which has aided me in the study of languages.

"In the third, which I think I shall call the *Natural History of Speech*, I treat the great subject of the origin of language.

"The fourth, the *History of the Calendar*, will comprehend everything connected with the division of time, with astronomical observations, with chronology, etc.

"The fifth, is an Etymological Dictionary of our language.

"The sixth and seventh, an Etymological Dictionary of the Latin language.

"The eighth, a collection of general observations upon those which have preceded it.

“The ninth, an Etymological Dictionary of the Greek language.

“The tenth—”

“Enough! enough!” interrupted Rabaut. “You no longer frighten, but you overwhelm me. Why it would take twenty men to do all that!”

Gebelin laughed. “Twenty men, you say? I begin to be re-assured. Monsieur d’Alembert asserted that it would require forty.\* Let us go on, and we shall see that one will do enough. You see this schedule? It is a dissertation in which I demonstrate that the language of Languedoc is anterior to the invasion of the Visigoths. I give the etymology of more than twelve hundred words of the language, of which about two hundred are Greek, six hundred Celtic, and the remainder Latin or Oriental. There are nearly an hundred pages, large ones as you see. Now, how long do you think I was at this?”

“A month?”

“Six days—and I was very far from having nothing else to do.”

“Your materials were ready. You had only to arrange and write down—”

“Not at all. When I began, I did not know the tenth part of what I discovered or guessed as I went on. Lately, at the house of the marquis d’Aubais, they brought me an old Bible in the Grison language, which I had never studied in my life. Whereupon, I began on the spot to arrange I do not know how many observations on this idiom, its origin, its history, etc. When I took up the Anglo-Saxon books of the venerable Bede, I only had to apply my key, in order to understand them, and I could read them as easily as French.”

“I know,—you do not study,—you devour. But—”

\* Historical.

“But there is a great deal of pride in it, you were going to say. There is some pride. Yes—I feel it. But less than you appear to apprehend. Would I dream of giving all these details to another? I have talked to you, as to a second self. If I reach the end I propose, to God, to God alone the glory! But I shall die on the road—or else I will reach this end.”\*

“Gebelin, you argue in vain. I do not like these gigantic plans; I cannot help looking upon them as a sort of defiance of Providence. Take care. God forbids avarice,—and science is wealth! All that weighs down the miser who amasses gold,—avidity, pride, attachment to the things of this world,—are you not sensible that these may be felt in amassing knowledge? But pardon, dear brother, pardon! you have no need of my counsels.”

“No need! Ah why are you not always at my side! You would force me to be wiser; and besides, you would give a more practical direction to my labors. You would teach me to do a little less for the learned, and much more for the world in general. We would take up our plan of translating the Bible.”

“Have you altogether abandoned it?”

“I translated several psalms quite recently.”

“God be praised! But shall you go on?”

“I am alarmed, I who am not often alarmed,—not at the labor, but at the responsibility. I have done enough, however to be convinced how very far we still are from being able to say that the Old Testament has been translated. But of all the versions which have ever been brought to my notice, the

\* Only the first nine volumes appeared; but at the death of the author, (1784,) his manuscripts filled upwards of fifty large portfolios. The letters and papers relative to the affairs of the Protestants, according to Rabaut, formed a still larger mass. All were lost.

Vulgate is certainly the worst. And to think that in their council of Trent, they dared to declare it authentic and inexpugnable! I have made the brave abbé Arnaud pass many a wretched hour on account of this unlucky decree. I showed him in the 22d Psalm alone, just as it is chanted by his Church, two or three contradictions which he was forced to admit. He asked me, if *our* translators had made none. I replied that our translators were only men, and that we had never declared them infallible. You should have seen him then,—struggling to prove that in declaring the Vulgate to be authentic, and in forbidding its alteration, the Church had not intended to proclaim its infallibility. ‘But,’ I said, ‘suppose that this is the case, the decree of the council would only be the stranger. What! be aware that the Vulgate has faults, and yet declare that it must be used as it is, forever, just as if it had none! He was in agonies. I made up my mind to laugh. ‘Confess,’ I said, ‘that it is a hard task to be at the same time a Catholic and a savant!’ Another subject in regard to which I almost brought him to confess himself in rebellion against the council of Trent, was that of the apocryphal books. He confessed,—and how could he deny it?—that neither the Jews, nor the early Christians, nor the Fathers, nor the doctors, nor the Church herself, before this council, ever placed these books in the same rank with the others. The whole question, accordingly, is, whether the Church, with such precedents, had a right to place them there? He endeavored to prove it. I then asked him if in his heart and conscience he believed the decree exact and good; and as he dared not assert this, after what he had confessed, I said ‘you see to what you are reduced! This decree, in which the Church gives you as authentic and sacred, writings formerly looked upon as not authentic, you do not believe any more than I do; you limit yourself to

maintaining that the Church had the right to make it, the right, in other words, to decree error. Is that being submissive? Is that being a Catholic?"

"I have not met many persons," said Rabaut, "who were Catholics in any other way. As many rights as she may claim, are granted the Church in theory; but it is another thing to believe all she teaches. I also have often amused myself by condemning in the name of the council of Trent, many persons who called and believed themselves Catholics, thanks to the care which has been taken to conceal from them many an article which would have made them reject all the rest. This would all be diverting enough if the champions of the Roman Church were reduced to take to their petty loopholes as their only defence, but the nearer you have been to proving to them that they are not Catholics, the more they will show you by their hatred and violence, that they are still too much so. They persecute us, in fact, far less because they are Catholics, than because they fear to be thought not so; we have no greater enemies than those who are obliged to *stiffen* themselves the most, in order not to surrender before our reasonings, and it seems as if every one chooses to impute to us as crimes, precisely those points upon which we embarrass them the most. The priests, for example, without equalling Arnaud by a great deal, still doubtless know more or less what you were remarking just now, on the subject of the apocryphal books. Well, to hear them talk, one of their chief complaints against us, one of the principal sources of their indignation, is that we,—they say—mutilate the Bible by rejecting these books."

"It is an indulgence, moreover," added Gebelin, "if they do not set to work and jest on the somewhat ancient language of our old versions and our psalms, as if we were further from

the French of Pascal and Racine, than they from the Latin of Virgil and Cicero! Moreover, we *preceded* these great models, while they wrote their abominable Latin *after* Virgil and Cicero. It would appear that the abbé de Caveirac, in the midst of his atrocious calculations in regard to the Saint-Bartholomew massacre, still finds time to let fly a few bolts at us, upon this subject. I am going to send this letter to Delabroue. He will procure the work, and as he has already broken more than one lance with the author— But I had forgotten. There are two letters for you also. Here they are.”

“This one—what a seal!”

“Let me see. The arms of Richelieu!”

Rabaut opened it, not without a certain emotion.

He was requested to make his appearance, on the next day but one, at Versailles. The letter was signed by one of the secretaries of the marshal.

“God be praised!” he said. “The petition has been read.”

“By the king?”

“The letter does not say; but—”

“If it does not say so, do not count upon it.”

“If I can see the duke, it is something.”

“It may be much,—and it may be nothing. It is enough to make one shudder, my poor friend, to reflect upon what the fate of a thousand, of a million of human beings may depend, for it is all the same, frequently, to those who have to rule them. A moment of good or ill humor, an accident, a nothing, a word which may please or displease in a petition of twenty pages—and behold some evil ceases,—or else continues for another century!”

“Here is something which I fear comes but in season to confirm what you say,” said Rabaut, breaking the seal of the other letter. “Precisely. I recognized the hand. See—



*Marie Durand, prisoner for the sake of Jesus Christ, at the tower of Constancy.*"\*

"She knew that you were at Paris?"

"No; she writes to Nîmes. The letter was sent me from there."

"She is the oldest, is she not, of our poor sisters at Aigues-Mortes?"

"Anne Gaussaint, of Sommières, has been there for thirty-seven years; five others have been there more than thirty. Marie Durand only went there in 1732, the year in which her brother, the minister, was executed at Montpellier."

"Twenty-eight, thirty, thirty-seven years of prison for poor women, because they were convicted of praying to God otherwise than as the king, or the king's confessor, dictated! The pagans were far less cruel. They adjudged death without delay."

"More humane, indeed,—and, above all, more excusable, since there was war to the death between their deities and the God of the Christians."

"Is it possible to know pretty accurately the number of our female prisoners?"

"At Aigues-Mortes, nineteen."

"I know it; but elsewhere?"

"Elsewhere, it is impossible to fix any number. All the convents in the South contain some. Many may have died, without our knowing anything of it; many, of whom we cannot hear anything more, are undoubtedly still living. It is a terrible thing, Gebelin, even to pass by these dark buildings, silent as the grave, in which slowly linger on these women, torn from their husbands, their fathers, their children.† They

\* At Aigues-Mortes.

† "It is just, Monsieur, that the patrol should be paid for the journeys

are not quite so frequently carried off now as formerly ; but the edicts still exist, the threats continue, and the sword is none the less hanging over their heads. When a family is assembled together, it can never know whether it is not for the last time. Quite recently, after a truce, which it had been at last hoped might continue a long time, the tower of Constancy has received two new captives. One was the mother of Bruyn. She had been captured when returning from a meeting: her husband was sent to Toulon, she to Aigues-Mortes. The other was quite a young woman, Marguerite Robert, arrested by an order of Marshal de Thomond, governor of Guyenne. What had she done? Nothing more than thousands of others; she had refused to be married before a curé, and I had blessed her union. They wished to make an example for the others: they took the first comer, or rather they selected her, beautiful, young, interesting, in order that her misfortune should produce a more painful sensation. Her husband, Vincent, of Uzés, who has been left at liberty, is almost mad with grief."

"He wrote to me," said Gebelin, "to implore me to interest myself for her. I have moved heaven and earth, but in vain. It is easier here to obtain the pardon of a criminal condemned by justice, than that of a Protestant arraigned by one of those condemnations which fall upon us by accident, and without form of trial. Our tyrants fear, and not without reason, lest, by mitigating the sentence, they might seem to confess its injustice. They prefer to forget a man in the galleys, or a

they make in arresting and conducting the daughters of Protestants to the houses destined for their education. When the parents are really not able to pay these expenses, I shall take the necessary measures for defraying them."

Despatch of Monsieur de Saint-Florentin to the intendant at Rouen, July 18, 1751.

woman shut up in a tower, to confessing publicly why they have been sent, why they have been left there."\*

"We had a sad proof of that," added Rabaut, "in regard to one of these poor women, Jeanne Guingues. She had a son in the army. This son was killed at Fontenoy in '45. In the midst of the transports of joy which the victory caused throughout the kingdom, we believed that the time was a favorable one to request the freedom of his mother. It was refused. Eight or ten years afterwards, the eldest of her grandsons was killed while fighting beneath the same banner. Another solicitation, another refusal. And she is still at Aigues-Mortes! Marie Durand, like the greater number of her companions, at last ceased to think of liberty. Her letters for a long time expressed unbounded resignation. Some friends, it appears, gave her hopes, and she became very unhappy. She wrote me constantly to implore me to act in her favor. In this letter again, see: 'For the sake of the bowels of Divine mercy, do everything you can to snatch us from this frightful sepulchre!' Poor women! What can I do? What can we do?"

"What indeed, when those even to whom we must send our petitions are not free to yield to our solicitations? During all

\* "A long time since, Monsieur, you sent me a favorable notice of the Sieur Serres, imprisoned at the fort of Brescou for about twenty years, for having married the sister of a preacher. The king consents that he shall be liberated."

Despatch of Monsieur de Saint-Florentin to the intendant of Languedoc, (Lenain d'Asfeld.)

It is comprehensible that the government did not like to grant pardons which reminded them of such condemnations; accordingly, the decree of liberation always stated that the condemned had testified a sincere regret for his *crime*. Often, likewise, for fear that the pardon might seem to recognize his innocence, certain restrictions accompanied it. Thus this same Serres, upon his liberation from the fort of Brescou, was banished from Languedoc.

my efforts for our galley slaves, for our prisoners, I have not yet met any one, from the duke de Choiseul to the lowest clerk, who did not receive me kindly, and appear to be interested in their fate. At first I always went away full of hope; after each visit I was astonished to have succeeded so well, and so quickly. But days, months went by, and the pardon never came. The governor himself, the duke de Fitz-James, solicited the liberty of the prisoners at Aigues-Mortes, two years ago, but in vain. It is because each one, in these affairs, each intendant, governor, and minister,—even the king himself,—is only the jailor of the Church, and the Church is inexorable. The man who has been for forty years the instrument of all our sufferings, the count de Saint-Florentin, is, I am convinced, constantly at war with the bishops. It has been asserted to me, proofs in hand. There is no severity which the bishops have not requested to be increased, and made more complete; there is no relaxation in regard to which they do not show themselves irritated, as if it were a treason against their Church or against them. Monsieur de Saint-Florentin says to any who wish to know, that his archives would furnish a singular insight into this subject. Let these melancholy records be carefully preserved, for some day, when persecution has gone out of fashion, the French clergy will not fail to cast all the odium of it upon the government. Have not certain historians already begun to make of the Inquisition a purely secular tribunal, an entirely political institution, for whose enormities, consequently, the Church is not to be reproached?

## XXX.

THE PRIEST AND THE HUGUENOT.—DISCUSSION ON THE UTILITY OF MONASTERIES IN A LITERARY POINT OF VIEW.— AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE AND OF THE CHURCH.

At this point of their conversation, Father Bridaine was announced. They looked at one another, amazed. Court could not understand so unexpected a visit from a man whom he only knew by reputation. Rabaut wished to retire, with the intention of making his appearance afterwards. On second thoughts he remained.

“I was not wrong, then,” said the missionary, upon perceiving him. “It is you whom I sought, Monsieur; I only came to your friend in order to inquire your address. But you were talking, gentlemen,—I interrupt you—”

“A fortunate interruption,” said Gebelin, “since it procures me the honor—”

Bridaine bowed. “We have not seen each other,” he resumed, addressing himself to Rabaut, “since the day at Versailles.”

“You think so?” said Rabaut. “Shall I tell you where you were an hour ago?”

“You have seen Bruyn?”

“Bruyn?—I do not know where he is. But I saw you, yourself, in the court of the Palace of Justice. You were present at what took place there. You picked up two half-burned leaves; you looked at them—in a manner—”

“Yes—” said Bridaine, with a little embarrassment. “But how did I happen to be there?”

“I saw you there. That is all I know about it.”

“I had just seen, in his cell, him whom you saw in Meaux,

at the door of the church. He was recognized and arrested. He may at any time be executed. He wishes to see you."

"I will go. Shall I be able to enter?"

"I will procure you the necessary permission."

Rabaut believed the Cevenol guilty of the assassination of the colonel. Bridaine did not see fit to correct his error, or to speak to him of the measures he was going to take to endeavor to save Bruyn.

They took their seats. Bridaine would have preferred to be alone with Rabaut; Rabaut with Bridaine. An astonishing intimacy had sprung up between these two souls. They both felt themselves lofty enough to clasp each other's hands above the ramparts of the two Churches.

Accordingly, for want of any other subject, the conversation turned upon the labors of Gebelin. Bridaine had often heard them spoken of; Rabaut, first as a friend, then as a Protestant, was proud of them. He did not rest until the savant had laid before the missionary, as he had just done before him, the plan of his gigantic work. Bridaine was confounded by it. Men of action are more liable than any others, to be alarmed at extensive cabinet labors.

"Well," said the minister, "all Benedictines do not wear the habit of Saint Benedict, do they?"

"I did not believe that there existed in the midst of the distractions of the age, men so worthy to wear it."

"The distractions of the age," replied Rabaut, "injure those only who are absorbed by them. For a mind naturally active and strong, they form the materials of a struggle in which it can but gain in force, activity and resources. For such an one, the thought of time lost is but a stimulant to employ well what remains. He hastens to his labors as others hasten to their enjoyments. He does in a few hours more work, per-



haps, than a man who likes to work, but who has his whole time,—whom nothing hinders, nothing excites.”

Bridaine smiled. “Is that an observation aimed at the convents.”

“I did not think of them,” replied the minister, “but if I had, would I have been wrong? Have we, without monasteries, had fewer learned men than you with them? And even without speaking of any Church beside your own, have you not had enough learned men who were not cloistered monks?”

“Monasteries were not instituted in order to make learned men.”

“True; science was never less thought-of than in those centuries when the greatest number were founded. But that does not prevent the service which has been done in this respect from being generally presented in our days as a powerful argument in their favor. My observation might serve as a reply to this argument.”

“Were not all the master-pieces of antique literature preserved in the monasteries?”

“Yes,” said Gebelin: “but how? I have made a number of researches on this subject, by whose results I have been struck, so little do they agree with what I have heard asserted by your Church. In the first place, in order that a benefit may deserve gratitude, it is necessary that the benefactor should have intended to do a service, or at least that he should not have rendered it without in the least suspecting it. And in this matter, did the monks imagine how much future ages were to owe to them? Can many of them be mentioned, who in preserving to us Virgil, Cicero, and Tacitus, appear to have been acquainted with what they preserved? The best proof that they were scarcely aware of it, is the state in which they have left the manuscripts to us; and above all, the immense

number which they defaced or allowed to be lost. Those which were delivered to us at the Renaissance, were not the thousandth part of the number which they could and ought to have preserved. And how many writings completely lost! How many authors of whom the names alone remain? How many works of the highest order, of which but three or four manuscripts have been found in all Europe? sometimes only one, as for instance the Phadrus, among others, discovered at Saint-Benedict, on the Loire; it would still lie buried there, for an indefinite length of time, if it had not been for the pillage of the abbey in 1562. Even Cicero, one of those least damaged during that thousand years of forgetfulness, we have not complete."

"I have already made the remark," said Bridaine, "that the convents were not established to serve as libraries. Perhaps, as you say, the argument to which your observations are a reply has been abused. Nevertheless, the fact is there; if the convents had not existed, where would you have gone to look for the ancients, you who love them so much?"

"Without the convents, that is to say, without the system of which the convents were a consequence, I think that we should have done very well without people to take care of the books, seeing that there would never have been any danger of their being lost. The history of the decline of letters may be divided, it seems to me, into three periods. During the first, the Church gradually seizes the monopoly of learning. During the second, having from day to day less to do in order to remain above the intellectual level of the people, she allows herself to decline into ignorance. In the third, she ends by finding herself if not below the people, at least below all those who have again begun to think and labor. It is from without, from her enemies, that she must recover her intellectual and

literary life. You speak of the Benedictines. They were the first, I know, to become an exception; but their finest works are posterior to the Reformation, and I could show you in every page traces of this great awakening. And what had the Reformation to do in order to give the signal for so much labor, to awaken in the opposite camp as well as in its own, all existing intelligence? Very little,—scarcely anything. An old book was taken up out of the dust. This dust was that which your Church had allowed to collect upon it,—ordering finally that it should eternally remain covered with it. Scarcely has it again seen the light, before everything in the world of ideas, seems to exist for and by it. Printing is proud to put itself at its service; all the sciences, all the arts come together and converge in it. Doctrines which you may hold to be false, but of which you cannot deny the immense renovating power, spring from these pages so long and so obstinately sealed. With this book alone in their hands, a few men find themselves strong against all the powers of Europe, learned in the presence of all its science, invincible to all the representatives of a past wounded to the death, from the pope to the emperor, from the magistrate to the hangman.”

“Might I not retort all this?” said Bridaine. “It is not the first time, I might say, that God has allowed evil to gain the victory. Is all emancipation a benefit? Doubtless the fruit also, which the first man gathered in the terrestrial paradise, was savory. And yet, this fruit was—the forbidden fruit.”

“Forbidden of God, and it is on that account, and that only, that his action was a crime.”

“I understand. You would say that the study of the Bible has not been forbidden by God, but by the Church. But for us, the voice of the Church is the voice of God.”

“Even when its commands are contrary to those of God?”

“It must be proved, in the first place, that this contradiction exists.”

“Let us stop, Monsieur. I have not, in truth, the courage to commence the demonstration which you require. When a Catholic sincerely accepts the combat, on the ground of the Bible, *I* then feel tempted to refuse; my adversary appears to me, from this very fact, so little of a Catholic, that I should fear, by exciting him, to make him still less so. I prefer simply to send him to the inspired book which he consents to adopt as an arbitrator; at furthest, I venture to point out two or three questions which I should wish him to address to himself;—but solemnly, in the presence of this book, between his conscience and God.”

“And these questions?”

“You wish to hear them? The first is this: ‘among the teachings of the Church, are there none of which I never should have dreamed,—neither I, nor any other person, if we had had no other guide but the Scriptures? Should I have found, for instance, the mass, confession, purgatory, the worship of saints? Should I have seen in the Bible, in particular, either an interdiction to read it, or anything whatever, which could make me believe in the future possibility of such an interdiction?’ This is the first question.”

“And now my turn,” said Bridaine.

“Allow me to continue. My three questions are so connected, that I must beg you to hear me to the end before replying.”

“Let us hear.”

“The second, then, is this: ‘among these things which I should not have found in the Scriptures, how many are there which the Scriptures really appear to teach or authorize, and which I find it possible to prove from the Scriptures?’ The

third and last is this; 'I may, it is true, draw from another source,—tradition. But can I seriously believe that doctrines so important in theory, so universally applicable in practice, would have been omitted, or so vaguely indicated in the Scriptures? Can I believe, for example,—that mass, confession, purgatory,—not to take up any other points,—these things which occupy so prominent a place in my life, in my worship, in the books which I read or write, in the sermons which I hear or preach,—can I believe, I say, that if God had wished to teach them, there would have been not one formal mention of them in the whole of the New Testament? The apostles, it is true, spoke more than they wrote; but can I imagine them writing two or three hundred pages,—nay,—twenty pages, ten pages, without clearly mentioning one of those grave points, which the Protestants deny? Is not the very fact that there may be a doubt upon the subject, a contest, in objects of such importance, a powerful opposing argument?' \* This is what I would have all the sincere, intelligent and pious men among you, ask themselves; this is the examination which I would have you one day make yourself."

"And how do you know that I have not made it?" interrupted the missionary.

"How? Because you are still a Catholic, still a priest. What! You have weighed, seriously weighed what Scripture says, or rather does not say, upon the subject of mass, confession, purgatory,—and yet have continued to perform the mass, hear confession, and speak of the souls in purgatory! You have seen that the Virgin is scarcely mentioned in the Gospels, totally forgotten in the Epistles, and you have persisted in recommending her worship as dating from the early days of the Church, as established at the direction of God and of the apostles! You have found in the Bible scores of invitations to read



it, scores of things which exclude the idea of any restriction whatever in these invitations; you have perceived that the Fathers advise, recommend, prescribe universally by the reading of it,—and you interdict it!”

“I?—never.”

“Never? Then I have no more to say upon that subject. It is a matter between you and your Church. Its voice, you say, is the voice of God. If God commanded me to take the Bible away from my brethren, I should take great care not to allow them to have it.”

“I also,—if the Church had absolutely interdicted it. Does not the council of Trent authorize us to allow those to read it whom we judge to be in a state to profit by it?”

“Let all the people, let everybody read it then, for if there is one thing which the Fathers appeared to lay down clearly, it is precisely this, that the Scripture is written for all, good for all, necessary for all.”

“Other times, other laws.”

“Undoubtedly; but in this case we ought to be able to forget how the law came to be made. It was an after-thought; it was when the resuscitated Bible menaced the institutions, the doctrines, the very existence of your church, that you concluded to forbid it. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when it was less read than ever, still there was no law yet made to forbid the reading of it. In the sixteenth, when it accidentally fell into the hands of Luther, Luther then broke no law in reading it. The council was held, and the prohibition given; a bold but dangerous admission of that which we have repeated to you for two centuries past, namely, that you cannot stand before the Bible, and that there will forever be a mortal enmity between it and you. You *allow* those to read it, you say, whom you judge to be in a state to profit by it. But even if



all your colleagues should do the same,—which they do not,—even if there were not, on the contrary, a very great number of them who do not study it themselves,—yet, is it enough only to *allow* it? What should you think of a curé who *allowed* his people to go to mass, to confess, to commune? What would Augustine, Jerome, Chrysostom, have thought of a priest of their day who confined himself to *allowing* what they recommended with so much earnestness, to the ignorant as well as the learned, to the poor as well as the rich? ‘Other times other laws,’ you say. I know that these same Fathers complained occasionally of the errors to which this liberty was liable; but what conclusion did they draw from it? That the faithful must be deprived of it? No. The only remedy which occurred to them for the mistakes which might occur in reading the Bible, was a more frequent and more attentive perusal of it. And, on the other hand, there is nothing more embarrassing for a defender of your church than the very nature of the differences of which they complained. How comes it that among these heresiarchs, who might be numbered by hundreds, and who so profoundly discussed all questions of discipline and doctrine, none attacked those which were attacked by the reformers? Why do we not see those who carried independence so far as to declare it unlimited, and without law of any kind, attacking *confession*? Why do not those who wished to have no clergy attack the pope? Why do not those who wish to have their worship without any ceremony whatever speak of abolishing the mass? Those who declared Christ to be a simple doctor,—why do not they make mention of the refusal of their homage to the Virgin? Let this be explained, or I must be allowed to conclude that in the early ages there was neither pope, nor confession, nor mass, nor anything of the kind;—for you, I imagine, are not one of those who dare to

assert that if these things were not attacked, it was because they were then universally admitted, and beyond all dispute."

"We do not deny," said Bridaine, "that certain doctrines and practices have, in course of time, received a wider development than at the period of their origin. But you forget that on the other hand, we contend for a perpetual intervention of God in all that is said or done by the church. These developments, accordingly, are as true, as sacred as the foundation. Even if you prove that we are not exactly what we were fifteen or sixteen centuries ago, what will you gain by it? Because a man is more developed at thirty than at twenty, will you dispute his right to present himself as the same individual, to bear the same name, to inherit the same patrimony?"

"No," said Rabaut; "I will deny him nothing which he has indisputably possessed from his birth, or in virtue of his birth; but I must ask to see his title to anything additional which he may claim. Where is your title? Can we reasonably permit you to say, 'Believe, for the church is infallible?' In order to believe, upon her own assertion, in her infallibility, it must first be believed that she is not mistaken in this assertion. If I am not persuaded of this beforehand, what good will her assertion do me? If you have titles, they are not, they cannot in fact, be anywhere but in the Bible. If all other rights were yours, you have at least no right to conceal these titles from those who wish to see them with their own eyes before believing in them."

"To conceal them, no; but the right to keep them out of the hands of those who would not be able to read them with profit, is given us by reason itself. Do you ask a father by what right he takes from his children those books which, in his opinion, they cannot read with safety?"

"You move in a circle, and there is no subject which does

not immediately bring your Church, if she be a little pressed, back to the same point. As soon as you reason, you not only lose all your advantages, but you place yourselves necessarily outside of all the rules of logic. A debate of any kind whatsoever, supposes the possibility of a defeat; but you are forced to announce beforehand that you will not yield, that you cannot yield. All debate is thus on your part an illusion; the only part which you can play in accordance with your principles, is that of ordering, of constraining. Accordingly, nothing is more confused, nothing more equivocal, than the regulations made at Trent on the subject of the reading and interpretation of the sacred books. They dared not positively interdict it; they could not permit it. It was necessary to give with one hand, and take back with the other. Nothing can be more curious than the discussions to which the preparation of the decree gave rise; and the decree had scarcely appeared, before it was pronounced at Rome still too liberal. Three months after the close of the council, Pius IV. interpreted it as an almost absolute prohibition; and it is not ten years since the inquisitor-general\* dared to write, ‘Some men have carried their audacity to the *execrable extremity*’—of reading the Bible? No,—‘*of asking permission* to read the Bible!’ Thus it is in Spain, the *most Catholic* kingdom. Is it different elsewhere? You cannot mention a country in which your church does not employ against the Bible all her available power and influence. Where she allows it to be read, it is only because she cannot prevent it. Where she can still burn those who read it, she does so. Where she can only burn the Bible itself—”

Bridaine started. Rabaut paused a few seconds.

“Conscience has spoken,” he resumed. “I see that I have touched a sore spot in your heart. Courage, my friend! Take

\* Perez del Prado, 1750.

out those two leaves which I saw you pick up in the court of the palace,—for I was there, you know.”

He took them out.

The book which had been torn and burnt by the hand of the hangman, in the year of grace 1760, at Paris, in company with the *Esprit* of Helvétius, the *Human Plant* of Lamettrie, and the *Chinese Letters* of d'Argens, was—the New Testament.

### XXXI.

THE BOOK WHICH WAS BURNT IN THE COURT OF THE PALACE.—  
CHOOSING A TEXT.—SUPREME AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH.

And the three sat there motionless, contemplating with various emotions these two leaves, torn, blackened, soiled with mud.

With Bridaine the emotion was one of confusion, of shame; it was the painful dejection of a man condemned to submit to an obligation against which his heart revolts. He did not acknowledge himself conquered, but he had no longer strength, nor courage, nor wish to combat.

With Rabaut it was a mingling of pity for his adversary, indignation against an impious despotism, and, above all, love for this sacred book so insultingly profaned. He would have wished to kiss these pages, as the sacred remains of the martyrs of old were reverently kissed among the ashes of the stake.

And with his friend it was indignation of a cooler sort, as well as the pity of a thoughtful man for those who imagined that by burning a little paper, they could arrest the flight of conscience and of thought.

“Give me these leaves,” said the minister, at length. “I will keep them as a souvenir of my journey to Paris.”

“Here they are,” said the priest. “But no; not yet. I wish to read them; I wish also that they should serve me, as—I am going to preach in a few days.”

“Well?”

“I will take my text from them.”

Bridaine was glad of this kind of expiation which had occurred to him. He joined thereby, as far as a Catholic could, in the sorrow of having seen the Bible burned; he offered to God and to the two Protestants a reparation for the outrage upon the sacred book.

He even wished to go farther. “Help me to choose one,” he said.

They took one of the two leaves. There was a fragment from the book of Acts.

“I will read,” said Rabaut. “Give it to me.

“— *they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.\**

“— *And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures—’*”

Rabaut paused without raising his eyes. Gebelin smiled. And, in fact, after the discussion which had just taken place, these last words were strangely pointed.

“— *Opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead.’*”

Then came several illegible lines.

“— *they drew certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.’*”

“They were really very foolish,” said Gebelin. “Why did they not quietly follow the religion of their fathers? What folly to wish to change what had been in existence for so many

\* Acts, xvii.



centuries! The Jewish Church, moreover, had received the most magnificent promises from God. What temerity to suppose it degenerate, and capable of being mistaken!"

"Are we to re-commence our discussion?" asked the missionary.

"I beg pardon—I had forgotten."

"Those who are persecuted," said Rabaut, "find it difficult not to seize, especially in the Scriptures, all that may appear to them an allusion to their misfortunes."

"Pardon," repeated Gebelin. "And yet, since the subject was mentioned, permit me to ask whether the comparison which I hinted at has never presented itself to your mind? You enumerate promises which indicate, according to you, that your church cannot be wrong; and that, consequently, when she condemns us, we are justly and fitly condemned. I do not wish at this moment to discuss these promises. I admit that it is to you, to you alone, that they are and can be addressed. But the Jews received far more magnificent ones—"

"For a time."

"Agreed; but allow me to finish. They received much clearer promises, I say, since there was no one among them who dreamed of doubting; whilst there have always been, even before our day, some Christians who did not interpret as you do, the aid promised to the church. These promises, moreover, had been confirmed by facts. God had presided visibly, as it were, over the destiny of His people; He had not ceased to watch, not only in the ordinary way, but by special ministers, by prophets, over the purity of the faith preached by Moses. Thus the Jews had all the reasons for believing in the infallibility of their church, which you have for believing in the infallibility of yours; they had them corroborated by the history of many ages, during which the Divine



manifestation had been plain and incontrovertible. This assurance, you say, was only for a time. Yes; but it was to last at least until the moment when they should pass under another law. When the body of doctors denied that Jesus was the Christ, what sign was there that they were not the only and true directors of the nation? None. Nothing had yet announced that the primitive promises were not still in force. And yet they were grossly mistaken. You also,—even if there were ages when you could not be mistaken,—you may be mistaken now; and if the high priest erred in not receiving the Christian law, may not the bishop of Rome have erred in anathematizing Luther and his companions? So that—”

“Do not urge the question,” said Rabaut. “He could not read a line which would not furnish materials for observations of this kind. I continue.

“*—— and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar—*”

But Court again interrupted.

“Yes; not a line, in fact, in this picture of the persecutions of those days, which does not seem written for us, and against the laws which oppress us. ‘They do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar,’ was said at Rome. ‘They do contrary to the decrees of the king,’ you repeat in France; and thereupon—”

“I never have thought it right,” said Bridaine, “that civil authority should intervene in matters of faith.”

“You condemn persecution?”

“I abhor it.”

“God be praised! Here is at least one. But how, then, how can you remain the minister and friend of a church which persecutes? How, at least, can you help rebelling against the horrors with which she pollutes herself?”

“Monsieur Rabaut has seen me at work among the Protestants of Languedoc. Let him say whether I had recourse to—”

“No,” replied Rabaut, “but you do not answer. You preached indulgence, it is true; you did not wish, you said, any other weapon but persuasion; but you knew very well that before you, behind you, on each side of you were men animated by very different principles. You knew that these Protestants to whom you never addressed yourself otherwise than as brothers, were treated like enemies, like slaves, like the off-scouring of humanity. When and to whom have you ever said plainly that there should be freedom of conscience, that God alone has the power and the right to direct it, that it is an abuse and a sacrilege to come between God and conscience? When and to whom have you ever said—but pardon! It is not you but your Church who must be appealed to. The employment of force is a necessary, inevitable, *fatal* consequence of the principles which she has laid down. As soon as she no longer has power in her hands, as soon as, for one reason or another, she ceases to employ it, what is she more than any other church? As soon as she talks of reasoning, of persuading, of convincing, what is Rome more than Geneva?”

“And her unity?” said Bridaine, “and the co-operation of so many millions of men?”

“In a worldly point of view it is clear that the position is a much better one. You undoubtedly possess all that would make those who are disposed to receive a religion ready made, cast themselves into your arms rather than into those of our ministers. What I meant to say, and what you will not deny, is that constraint once done away with, a reflecting man feels himself immediately as free in respect to your instructions as ours. Unity, numbers, seniority, all these are nothing more than a presumption in your favor, it is true, but which cannot be weighed against arguments, against facts. I repeat it; do away with constraint and you have nothing more than we have.

Is it not proved at this very time? We have been discussing with you for nearly an hour. Have you found that the unity, the infallibility of your Church have given you any advantage over us? Have you even endeavored by argument to convince us of this unity, this infallibility? These latter are no arguments, as you must feel, except with those already convinced or disposed to be so without examination. In themselves they prove nothing, for they themselves must always be proved in the first place, and then we are again on those grounds of logical reasoning, to which nothing else has a right to resort but simple good sense and history. If we had given up just now, would it have been because you are the organ of one Church rather than another? By no means. We would have yielded to your reasons, that is to say, to the authority of reason, not to that of a man or of a Church. If we do not yield, if your reasons appear to us insufficient, what can you do more than any other doctor? What can your Church do? There is no medium: she must either leave us in peace,—or persecute us. And in this, permit me to remark, we see the first chastisement of her pride. She must be exclusive, intolerant, and cruel,—or else she immediately descends to the level of those sects of which she speaks with so much contempt. She cannot remain what she is without constantly compromising herself yet more in the eyes of humanity and reason; she cannot change without forswearing herself.”

“Toleration, I see,” said Bridaine, “would not find you very grateful.”

“We would be very grateful towards the men who might grant us toleration, although, strictly speaking, there is no occasion to be grateful for the cessation of an injustice; as for your Church, there is no likelihood of her furnishing us, of her own free will, an opportunity of being ungrateful.”

“How do you know? A pamphlet has recently appeared—”

“The *Conciliator*, you mean?”

“Yes. You would subscribe to it almost entirely.”

“That is true.”

“Do you know by whom it was written?”

“Not by a priest, certainly.”

“You are mistaken. It is by the abbé de Brienne, grand vicar of the archbishop of Rouen.”

“Indeed? Well, let us wait until he becomes archbishop himself. If he persists I shall confess myself vanquished.”

“You are inexorable.”

“It is because I know with whom we have to deal. You have no lack of those young priests, who half from liberality, half from infidelity,\* emulate each other as to who shall be most tolerant. But once in possession of office, and what has become of all this fine talk? Within a few years, many of those who were most distinguished in the saloons of Paris for the breadth and generosity of their views, have risen to the episcopal dignity. What have they done for us? Or rather what have they not done against us? It is quite simple. As soon as a man becomes one of the heads of the church, he must deny her tenets, or do as she does. After the frightful anathemas with which your popes have loaded us, what bishops could treat us as brethren? After the encouragement given by your Church to those sovereigns who persecute us, after the pompous eulogiums so often showered by her upon those who have done us the most injury, who, without condemning her, could blame that which she has so often counselled, so often ordered, so often commended! No, no! We shall never obtain anything from her. If toleration is to be established, it will not be without

\* The abbé de Brienne was closely connected with the abbé de Morellet.

her having struggled till the last moment to maintain intolerance. If peace be established, the Church may submit to it; but as to extending her hand to it, never!"

## XXXII.

## INTOLERANCE OF THE CLERGY.

Was Guebelin too severe? It might be thought so then, especially in the presence of Bridaine; but events have proved that he was but too correct. It is known that the clergy struggled to the very last, against the tolerant views of Louis XVI. and his council. And as for this very abbé Brienne, (the author of the pamphlet on toleration,) he thus expresses himself after becoming an archbishop, in an address to this king upon the occasion of his coronation, when he had been made to swear, according to custom, "*honestly* to exterminate all heretics."

"You will reject, Sire, the counsels of a false peace, the systems of a guilty toleration. We implore you to do so; do not delay to deprive error of the hope of having temples and altars among us; complete the work begun by Louis the Great, and continued by Louis the Well-beloved. It is reserved for you to give the finishing stroke to Calvinism in your kingdom. Order that the assemblies of the Protestants shall be dispersed. Exclude sectarians without distinction from all branches of the public administration; and you will assure to your subjects the unity of a true Christian worship."



## XXXIII.

BRIDAINÉ CHOOSES HIS TEXT.—UNIVERSAL DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE AFTER THE REFORMATION.

“God will judge,” said Bridainé.

“God will judge,” said Rabaut. “Let us continue.

“*And they troubled the people, and the rulers of the city when they heard those things.*

“*And when they had taken security of Jason and of the other, they let them go.*

“*And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea, who coming thither, went into the synagogue of the Jews.*

“*These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so.’*”

Rabaut without pausing, had emphasized these last words.

“Well?” said Gebelin.

“Well?” said the missionary.

“I will not ask you,” continued Gebelin, “for it would be almost a sarcasm, if you will take that for a text; but let me ask you once more, seriously, fraternally, what you make of these lines. Here are people to whom it does not appear as if even an apostle should be believed on his mere assertion; here is the companion of the labors of the apostle Saint Luke, author of the book of Acts, who is not contented with looking upon it as very natural, but who praises them very highly for it. They believed, but only when they found in the Scriptures—”

“In what Scriptures, if you please? In the Old Testament,



in the prophecies which predicted Jesus Christ. Nothing more natural, as you say, than to consult them, since their object was to aid the Jews in recognizing the Messiah. Is it the same with the New Testament? Are the books which it contains of such a nature that their contents can and must be known only by reading them? Have you not yourselves, in your churches, people who do not read them? People who do not know how to read?"

"As for the last, we have scarcely any of them; and it is no small praise to the Reformation, be it said *en passant*, that it has done so much from its very commencement for the instruction of the masses. 'Where two or three could read before,' says Luther, somewhere, 'you will now scarcely find two or three who cannot.' And if it were not so, what would that prove? Is a law just and good only provided every one chooses to profit by it? Because in a Church there are people who do not know how to read, and who do not care to know, shall this Church have the right to exact that I shall accept as they do, a religion ready made, and that I shall give up the right to examine it? Confess, my friend, confess that you are ill at ease when you are forced to give to intelligent, conscientious, reflecting men, such reasons as these! Are you perchance ignorant with what vigor they were refuted in the early ages by these same writers whose authority in all other matters appears to you so high and so holy? A folio volume might be made of all that they have said upon this subject. There is one sermon especially, of Chrysostom, which one might believe written by a Protestant of our day, so clearly and directly does it reply to the objections made to us. 'When we receive money,' he says, 'we wish to count it ourselves; and when things divine are at stake, shall we shut our eyes and seize the offered opinions of others? Consult then the Scriptures.' But they

are not plain enough. ‘The Holy Spirit, he continues, ‘has confided the writing of them to unlettered men, in order that all, even the most ignorant, may understand and profit by the Word.’ But have we time to occupy ourselves with these things? ‘Let no one present these miserable pretexts to me; I must gain a livelihood; I must bring up my children. It is not for me to read the Scriptures, but for those who have retired from the business of the age. Poor man! Is it because thou art distracted by a thousand cares, that it is not thy business to read the word of God? Why thou hast far more need of it than those who have retired from the world to give all their time to God.’ Thus speaks Chrysostom. Do you find one of the Fathers who does not say about the same,—one who has preached from the Bible without recommending and prescribing the reading of it,—one, in short, who has put any other restrictions to this right, to this *duty*, rather,—than the obligation to read it with attention and respect? No, no! no more of these idle reasons in which you yourself do not believe. The true, the only reason is, that you are afraid of the Bible.”

“Afraid! Good God!” cried Bridaine. “Afraid of the Bible!”

“Not you, as a Christian,” said Rabaut. “Certainly not. I know well enough that you love it; I know with what admirable vigor you set forth its instructions. But it is one thing to talk of it in the pulpit, and another to place it in the hands of the faithful. In the pulpit, when you can quote it in support of your assertions, you do so; when you cannot, you let it pass, but you do not say that you cannot. The hearer who has confidence in you, supposes always that you can. Never having seen the book as a whole, he imagines it containing in the plainest manner, all that you teach him; he cannot

doubt that these things all occupy a place in it, proportionate to the importance which they have in your Church. This is an error which the sincerest among you are forced to abstain from correcting. Thus every priest, even the most disposed to love, to quote the Bible, and to communicate all its pages one after the other to his flock, is necessarily afraid of putting it into their hands entire. He feels that they would not find it what they must imagine it to be, from the instructions and practices of the Church; he is alarmed to think what great gaps the most submissive of the faithful, if he reflect a little, cannot fail to find in it. But for the last time let us go on.—I do not ask you to answer.—I ask no justification.—We are not your judges.—God will judge, as you said just now.—Let us continue.”

“Go on.”

“Ah! here is half a page entirely illegible. It was the discourse of Saint Paul in the Areopagus. Shall we take the other?”

“No; I said that I would take my text from this leaf.”

“But there is nothing more.—Ah! yes,—here is one more verse.

“*Because God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world.*”

#### XXXIV.

##### DUTIES OF PREACHERS AND HEARERS.

“That is it!” exclaimed the missionary. “That sums up admirably what I have to say to these fine lords, to these grand ladies, who look upon it as a merry-making, I am told, to come and hear me preach! I will make them perceive, at least once, in its most terrible aspect, that religion which they make,

or which is made for them, so large, so easy, so convenient. I was hesitating; was asking myself if I would not do better to avoid such a sensation. But no.—I am decided. It is the will of God. He has spoken to me by this leaf.”

“Good,” said Rabaut; “it is well, brother! I love to see this confidence and earnestness. What should we poor laborers for the Lord do, if we did not feel ourselves from time to time under His immediate direction? Go,—speak. It is He who sends you to this crowd of brilliant sinners.”

“Perhaps so. But He has sent so many others to them,—and so many others have failed!”

“Discouraged already?”

“No. But every time that I go into the pulpit, I cannot help asking myself, What will remain in a month, in a week, in a few hours, of the discourse which is to be listened to? What, after all, am I going to do, I think to myself, if not to render almost all my audience more guilty? They know all that I am going to tell them. They have been a thousand times reprovèd for the same things in regard to which I am now going to reprove them. They have promised a thousand times all that I am now going to make them promise. O lamentable dissimulation, where He who is deceived is God!”

“Alas!” said the minister, “how many times have I thought the same thing within myself! I am less exposed than you, it is true, to preach to an audience who come for form’s sake. I scarcely preach to any people but those who, in addition to our habitual perils, must brave cold, heat, rain, snow, and distance, in order to hear me. Even if all these sacrifices did not prepare their hearts to receive religious impressions, it would still be natural that they should endeavor to profit by a sermon so dearly bought. But unhappily, in the country as in the city, beneath the vault of heaven as well as beneath those of

your temples, human nature is, and always has been, the same. I also have often asked myself whether, in preaching to those who listened little or carelessly, I ought not to fear aggravating their responsibility in the sight of God. But what is to be done? Must we give up preaching the gospel? Must we soften it so much, that our hearers, in violating it, shall be as little guilty as possible? God forbid! And yet I think that there is a way of profiting by your remark; I think that the preacher, without weakening any of the commands or threats of the word of God, can and ought to avoid a too frequent presentation of those to which he positively knows that his hearers will pay but little attention. It is a sort of charity, which, like all others, may degenerate into weakness; but it should not on that account be given up. I do not like to hear death, the judgment, and hell, brought forward on every occasion.

*‘Nec Deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus,’*

I will willingly say with Horace. Not that the thought of God and of eternity ought not to breathe forth from your smallest words. Let it hover unceasingly above your audience, but always too high for them to grow familiar with the holy terrors which accompany it. It is only a poor commander who would bring forward the whole of his army on every occasion. Nothing leads more surely to success than to know, on all occasions, exactly what energy and force to employ.”

“And yet,” observed Bridaine, “this precept is perhaps more correct in rhetoric than in religion. There are no little sins, strictly speaking. All displease God, if not equally, at least sufficiently to prevent any true Christian from ever saying to himself, ‘This is one from which it is not worth while to abstain.’ But that which true Christians do not say, the



wicked, who are the great majority, have a great inclination to say. If they at last perceive that you reserve your threatenings for sins of a graver sort, will they not feel themselves more and more authorized to think that there are little sins, which leads immediately to the conclusion that they may be committed without fear of consequences?"

"Your remark is correct," said Rabaut. "I may even add, that it astonishes me to hear it from your lips, and that this is another point in regard to which, you without knowing it, are better than your Church. Nothing can be more unchristian, as you said, than the division of sins into trivial and important; but what else in reality is your division of them into *venial and mortal*? However that may be, to return to your idea, I think that it would in fact be very dangerous in certain cases, to manifest an intention to allow the great terrors of the law to rest undisturbed. But it is one thing to soften them, to cover them, to be false in short, to the ministry,—and another to abstain from scattering them too plentifully at the risk of leading people to pay no more attention to them. A preacher who can do nothing without having recourse to this extremity, is like the wagoner held fast in the mud, who invokes the gods, instead of disengaging his wheels; or if you choose, he is like him who cannot hold his whip without cracking it every moment, so that his horses at length take no more notice of it. Once having adopted this style, it is difficult to abandon it. It is only the most violent efforts which still from time to time gain some little attention, and produce some few results. These great resources which have been so miserably worn out must then be rejuvenated by grandiose expressions; this paltry mixture of a merely human style, will destroy the little of true grandeur which may have remained."

"I believe in truth," added Bridaine, "that when we con-



plain of the little impression produced by the grandest ideas, we ought often to begin by seeing if it is not more or less our own fault. A cook,—(excuse me the comparison,—it will go with that of the wagoner;—) a cook, I say, who saw the finest and most highly-seasoned dishes received with indifference, would doubtless have reason to complain of the guests; but he would be very wrong at the same time, to put himself out of the question, and not to inquire in what respect he himself may have contributed to the ill success of which he complains. To return to ourselves, I believe nothing would be more instructive than an examination of this sort. It would be a new, interesting, and eminently practical manner of studying pulpit eloquence.

“I understand,” said the minister. “A conscientious preacher cannot fail to have sometimes, by instinct, followed the method you mention; but the study would gain by being systematized. In place of proceeding, as is generally the case, from the rules to their application, we should go from the application to the rules; in place of asking what must be done, we should analyse what we have done; in short, instead of discussing the results to be obtained, we should examine those that have been obtained, and according to what is lacking in these, we may perceive what has been faulty in our manner of proceeding. It would be the best method of keeping constantly in view not only the secondary and conventional object of writing more or less correct, or more or less eloquent sermons; but the true and only object, that of instructing or regenerating. Let us not ask, ‘what must I say in order to persuade them?’ but, ‘what would be necessary to persuade me.’ A true preacher beholds himself seated among his audience. For him, the first sinner to be condemned, is himself. This position, I know, is difficult to take, difficult to keep.”

“Almost impossible,” said the missionary; “and this, when I examine myself in the presence of God, is one of my chief subjects of confusion. How many times, after a long and vehement sermon, have I suddenly perceived that I had taken none of it to myself; that it had not even entered my mind to do so! How many times have I not even perceived this omission! And how can we be surprised, after that, that others quit the church as we do the pulpit! Always the story of the mote and the beam, alas! We complain that we are unheeded by our hearers, and we do not even heed ourselves.”

“Or we heed ourselves too much.”

“It is the same thing: forgetfulness of the substance is closely connected with an undue attention to the form. Here, surely, we are not altogether in fault. However able or pious a preacher may be, he must pay more or less attention to his words, his phrases. If he extemporizes, he must seek them; if he recites, he must recollect them. But what preacher can boast of never having given more attention to the form of his discourse than was strictly necessary? Who will assert that he has never sought in the looks and motions of his audience the human and worldly effects of his words? Ah! we say often enough, in theory, that we must desire the safety of souls before all else; but even among those whose chief aim it is, find me one who has not frequently been more occupied with his human than his spiritual success, and more pained by the failure of one sermon than the fruitlessness of twenty others!”

“Gentlemen,” said Gebelin, “reassure yourselves. These are things in regard to which, if a man feels his weakness, that very fact makes him strong. Socrates was right in believing himself to have learned much, when he had learned to know that he knew nothing. And that which he said of human wisdom, the gospel authorizes us to say of the wisdom of God.

Christian perfection in all things is less to be perfect, than to feel conscious of our imperfections. As for myself, if I did not already know that you are perhaps the most worthy in this age to speak in the name of God,—what I have just heard would be sufficient to convince me.”

“Enough!” they exclaimed.

“Enough,” repeated the minister. “Since, according to your own opinion, it is our humility which constitutes our only merit, do not deprive us of it by praises on which our poor hearts are but too much inclined to feast themselves. Let us rather continue our reading. You have a text, Monsieur. It is now my turn.”

### XXXV.

#### RABAUT'S TEXT.—ROMAN FISCAL CODE.

“Your turn?” said the missionary, astonished.

“Yes, I wish one also. I read for you, read now for me.”

“Shall we discuss, as we go on?”

“Why not?”

“Because we have discussed only too much already.”

“Are we less friends than before?”

“I hope not.”

“You hope? I am sure.”

Bridaine took the other leaf and read :

“——‘ *Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.\**”

“‘ *And as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*”

“‘ *Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils ; freely ye have received, freely give.’ ”*

He stopped, and smiled.

\* Gospel according to Saint Matthew. Chapter X.

“If I had not picked up these leaves myself,” he said, “I would believe that you had selected them.”

“Is there then any necessity that we should select,” said Gebelin, “in order to stumble upon things which your Church would like better to forget?”

“Come,” replied Bridaine, “I await the tempest.”

“It will not be a very severe one,” said Rabaut; “you expect too violent an attack, for I see from your manner that you are no partisan of the Roman fiscal code, and that you like not to see those sell, whose master said to them, ‘Give.’”

“Yes, I confess it. If I had to order a reformation, I think I should begin there, for there is nothing which does more injury to religion, to the priests—”

“To the priests doubtless, but more especially to religion. I do not speak of the attacks to which this system exposes it from infidels, mockers and superficial men. Those are either allowed to say what they will, or are required to observe, that it is necessary the priest should live; that if they wish to pay nothing, they are free, etc. But there is a graver aspect; it is the moral degradation of religion, in the minds even of those who pay without complaining, and who see nothing evil in the custom of paying. One is confounded to perceive how completely holy things become, in their eyes, a merchandize like any other; but the final consequence of these perpetual purchases, from baptism to burial, from the confessional to purgatory, is the opinion,—not actually taught by you, but none the less profoundly engraved upon the hearts of multitudes,—that salvation may be purchased, and that the only necessity, in fact, is to pay well for it. I do not enter, you perceive, upon the irritating side of the question. I do not say, that your priests receive by this means most exorbitant revenues; I assert, that of all the means of providing for the maintenance of

worship and of its ministers, this is the least compatible with the true interests of religion and the true dignity of the ministry. The evil is not that recourse should have been had to it at periods when it was perhaps necessary ; but that it should not have been abandoned as soon and as universally as possible, that it should no longer be felt how vicious and fatal the system is."

"I have shown you what I feel in regard to it," said Bridaine. "I shall now continue.

*"And whosoever shall not receive you nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.*

*"Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye—"*

"You do not stop there?" interrupted Rabaut. "If you but knew how much we love, in the midst of all our sufferings, to read these words of our Saviour to His disciples! All these gloomy prophecies, with which He mingled the glimpses of His grace, are seized by us as so many appeals to our zeal, and aids to us in our misery. 'Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves!' How many a time I have said it, in the name of my Master, to the poor flocks lost among so many adversaries, to the poor shepherds upon whom I, their brother, laid my hands, sending them to their work with almost the certainty that they were going to meet their death! Listen. In eighteen months, if I live, I have to officiate at one of these ceremonies. I have a new sheep to send forth among your wolves. It is my son. I shall preach on that day. This shall be my text."

They looked at one another with deep emotion. Bridaine could scarcely restrain his tears.

“Give me my leaf,” said Rabaut. “Here is yours. On Monday then—”

“You are coming to hear me preach again?”

“Certainly. And you, shall you ever hear me?”

“I hear you?”

“Why not?”

“But when?”

“When I preach from this text which you have given me.”

“But where?”

“I do not know.”

“But, then—”

“God will order it. Adieu, I am going to see your prisoner.”

Rabaut departed, and a short time after, Bridaine quitted Gebelin.

### XXXVI.

THE KING'S GAMBLING MONEY.—WINES.—THE OLD ELMS.—  
RICHELIEU'S IDEAS IN REGARD TO THE SUPREME  
AUTHORITY OF KINGS.

Two or three days after this conversation, if we had been permitted to enter the smaller apartments of the chateau of Versailles, we should have found towards evening, in the same room, seated upon the same arm-chairs, beside the same chimney-piece, the two men whom we have already seen there on a former occasion.

Now, as then, they had just returned from a walk in the gardens; now, as then, one of them had exhausted for the entertainment of the other, all that the court and city could furnish of anecdotes, news, and little or great scandals; now, as then, the one had become weary of listening, the other of relat-



ing, and *ennui*, after having followed them step by step among the marvels of Le Nôtre and Marigny, had come and installed itself before them beneath the shelter of the palace.

The king, however, was even sadder and more ennuyé than usual. The marquise de Pompadour had thought proper to celebrate her sudden return to favor by a number of brilliant fêtes. The château of Bellevue had been illuminated; the old royal forests, so silent and solitary since the king no longer went to the chase, had echoed with the sound of the horn, the baying of the hounds, and the brisk gallop of the horses through the pathways overgrown with bushes. But all these sounds had failed to awaken an écho in the desolate heart of the monarch. These gaily spent days only served to increase the vacancy within; and although he had beforehand, but little expectation of any other results, still he had groaned in secret to find no other. Thus it is that the invalid declares in vain, that he has no faith in the efforts made to save him; it is still with a painful stupefaction that he beholds his prediction confirmed.

In this state in which nothing can quiet his anguish, the thing most calculated to increase it, is that there should still be a remedy which occurs to him, but of which he is obliged to deprive himself.

This painful increase of misery, the king had felt for some days.

The emotions excited by gaming had been from his childhood one of his resources against his incurable *ennui*; but he had been obliged to increase them gradually, like the drinker who must have his wines stronger and stronger. For some years past, mountains of gold had alone been able to stimulate him sufficiently to prevent him from becoming as weary of this as of everything else. He generally lost; and as his dignity exacted that in case he won he should restore in some other

form all that he had gained,—his *gambling funds*, as they were called, formed one of the heaviest expenses of his private budget.

Now the comptroller-general Monsieur de Silhouette, had just required the suppression of this, either in order to lighten general expenses or in order to authorize more important suppressions. The king had submitted; but he suffered very much from it, and every day increased his suffering.

After having done his best to enliven him, Richelieu had finished by holding his peace and sulking a little. These were his usual tactics in order to force him to listen a little better, or to gain his consent to some new *pleasure*, that is to say, some new *ennui*. We saw that it aided him, the preceding week, to bring the king once more under the old dominion of the marquise. And on these occasions it was always the king who took the first step.

“Richelieu,” he said, “what are you thinking about?”

“I? nothing,” replied the marshal. “I am too good a servant of your Majesty, ever to occupy myself otherwise than you do.”

“Here is a new sort of flattery! When I see you committing a folly I am to conclude that I have just committed one also? But you are mistaken, Richelieu! No; I was very far from thinking of nothing. Tell me, Monsieur the governor of Guyenne, is there any drinkable wine in the Bordelais country?”

It often happened that the poor king cut short his sad thoughts by seizing abruptly upon a subject which had, for that matter, always been a favorite one of the Bourbons. From father to son, this race eat and drank largely and with relish, and it was no jest that among the three talents attributed by the old song to Henry IV., their ancestor, was numbered that

of a "good drinker." None of them, however, with the exception of the regent, had carried it to excess; but what was not *excess* for them would have been so for many others. Louis XIV. at the summit of his glory, and Louis XVI. surrounded by his gaolers, submitted equally to the laws of their imperious appetite. It was still more natural that it should reign despotically over a prince who had neither the distractions of glory, nor the preoccupations of misfortune.

The duke was accordingly not surprised at this curious interpellation. The governors were accustomed to hear themselves questioned in regard to the best productions of their provinces, and it would have been dangerous for any one coming from Perigord to neglect the collection of all possible information in regard to the truffle crop.

It is true that the governor of Guyenne might have known at this period, but little of the wines belonging to his jurisdiction. To the shame of the fashion, be it said, the laughing hills of the Bordelais had until now been little noticed. Neither the king nor any one else at Versailles had in all probability ever tasted their productions. He did not even ask if the wine were good, but whether it was drinkable.

Happily, Richelieu, who was unceasingly upon the track of something new, in gastronomy as in all else, had made a tolerably profound examination of the subject.

"Sire," he replied, "they have what they call white Saunterne, which, though far from being so good as that of Monrachel, or that of the little slopes in Burgundy, is still not to be despised. There is also a certain wine from Grave which smacks of the flint like an old carabine. It resembles Moselle wine but keeps better. They have besides in Médoc and Bazadois, two or three sorts of red wine, of which they boast a great deal. It is nectar fit for the gods, if one is to believe

them; yet it is certainly not comparable to the wine of Upper Burgundy. Its flavor is not bad, however, and it has an indescribable sort of dull saturnine acid which is not disagreeable. Besides, one can drink as much as one will. It puts people to sleep and that is all."

"It puts people to sleep?" said the king. "Send for a pipe of it."

"I will write for it this evening, sire."

"By the way, they say that the Bordelais are furiously angry at you."

"At me! And pray why?"

"Certain trees were mentioned—"

"They have not yet done with that? What memories these provincials have!"

"What was it about these trees? I do not exactly recollect."

"Some old elms, sire, which were to be cut down to make room for a magnificent theatre. The aldermen opposed it; the citizens, in order to provoke me, took sides with the aldermen. The matter must be brought to an end. So, one fine morning, the trees are found lying on the ground. Thereupon, as your Majesty may well imagine, a grand uproar was raised; but in the meantime, my ground was ready, and the theatre was built. Did I not do them a service?"

"Perhaps so; but it was their right, I think, to refuse. A governor—"

"A governor, sire, is your representative,—is the king."

"And have I the right to cut down the trees in a city which do not belong to me?"

"You certainly have that of cutting off the heads in it."

"After judgment."

"After and before."

“Indeed? Suppose you go and say that to the gentlemen of the parliament.”

“And I would say it to their faces, confound them, the impudent lawyers! What, sire! are you too going to fancy that your power has limits? Who established these parliaments? In whose name do they judge? Are not you, in France, the supreme and only judge? These gentlemen are simply your councillors in matters of justice, just as your councillors of state and your ministers are in executive matters. Are you bound by the decisions of your ministers? Are you even obliged to consult them? No, sire, no! Your power has no other bounds than those which you choose to put to it. The laws and ordinances by which judgment is regulated were made by yourself and your predecessors. You can modify them, change them, abolish them. They only exist in you, as do the bodies which use them. Take a bit of paper, and write upon it, ‘No more parliaments.’ Sign it,—and there will be no longer any parliaments.”

The old duke could understand no jesting upon the subject of royalty. He was, in fact, supported by history. The king was the supreme and only judge. No limit was found to his power, the fixing of which, upon going back, was not to be found in this power itself. We still regard with admiration Louis IX. personally administering justice beneath the oak at Vincennes. What did he do but exercise, as a father, it is true, but still exercise the most terrible and absolute authority?

Louis XV. liked well enough, in theory, these doctrines which asserted that there was no reason why a king of France should not be a despot, after the manner of the sultans, if it pleased him. Practically, he was afraid. His weakness, aided by a sufficient quantity of common sense, permitted him to see the too logical absurdity. It was not until ten years after,



when the parliaments consolidated their pretensions to be of themselves something in the state, into a system, that he ventured to make a solemn appeal to ancient facts and principles. On the seventh of December, 1770, all the parliament of Paris being at his order met together, clothed in crimson robes, in the saloon of the guards, at Versailles, he made his appearance in all the splendor of royal majesty. The parliament, standing and uncovered, was to listen and be silent. "Messieurs," said the chancellor Maupeou, "his Majesty must believe that you will receive with submission a law containing the true principles, etc.\* Go back to the first institution of the parliaments, follow them in their progress. You will see that they receive their existence and power from the king alone, and that the plenitude of power resides always in the hand which has communicated it. They are neither an emanation nor a part one of the others. The authority which created them circumscribes their jurisdiction, and fixes its subjects as well as its extent. Charged with the application of the laws, it is not for you either to extend or restrict their stipulations. When the law-giver wishes to manifest his will, you are his organ, and his goodness permits you to be his council. There your ministry ends. The king weighs your observations; he judges of the advantages or disadvantages of the law; and if he then commands, you owe him the most perfect submission. If your rights were more widely extended, you would no longer be his officers, but his masters, etc."

\* The edict which the parliament had refused to register contained three principal stipulations:

1st. Prohibition to the parliaments from considering themselves as connected one with the other, and forming but one body. 2d. Prohibition from interfering in political affairs. 3d. Prohibition from deferring the execution of edicts, when, after having heard their remonstrances, the king should abide by his first orders.



This was harsh, but rigorously true. To maintain the contrary, and yet assert themselves to be the supporters of the old monarchy, was—no offence to *Messieurs*—a lie. But how can we be astonished that *Messieurs* were not in favor of the old doctrines, when the king himself dared not be so?

## XXXVII.

## THE KING SEES MORE CLEARLY.—A PLAN.

“Well said, Richelieu!” he exclaimed. “Your late grand-uncle, the cardinal, could not have spoken more properly. But, my poor Richelieu, he lived one hundred and twenty years ago.”

“And suppose it were five hundred?”

“You would be a hundred times more mistaken,—though you are quite right all the time.”

“What matter is it to them whether you can or cannot do everything, provided that you wish to do what is for their good, and keep up some few formalities?”

“You kept up formalities finely—you, my representative, as you say—with your trees at Bordeaux! You have made me perhaps more enemies down there than the cardinal made for Louis XIII. by decapitating a Montmorency. The abuse of power in little things contributes far more to alienate the people from us than its abuse in great matters. Besides, we are no longer in those days when, provided the king was good, no one troubled himself as to whether it was in his power to do evil. They want guarantees now.”

“And by what right do they want them?”

“Understand, my friend, that I am here the advocate neither of my parliament nor my people. They want them—because

they want them. I do not pronounce whether they are right or wrong; I only state facts. I repeat it, they want guarantees. It is not enough for them that I am good—or passable; they begin to wish it out of my power to be otherwise. You know Quesnay, the physician of Madame de Pompadour. It was remarked,—indeed I had myself remarked,—that he avoided my presence. The marquise at last alluded to it one day. ‘Madame,’ he said, ‘I do not like to see a man who could with a word have my head cut off.’ ‘Nonsense!’ she replied; ‘the king is so good!’ But he went away shaking this head which I permit him to keep, and muttering, ‘So good!—so good! What does that prove?’”

“Impertinent fellow,” said Richelieu.

“Impertinent if you choose, but impertinent fellows of this kind, begin to be so very numerous, that they will have to be consulted some of these days.”

“I hope I shall not see that day.”

“Your children will see it. And the noble oaks of your park, Richelieu, may one day pay well for the *bourgeois* elms of the aldermen of Bordeaux.”

“Still talking of these elms, sire?”

“You would never guess what made me think of them again, for the story is rather old, and I confess that I had entirely forgotten it. Do you remember the passage in which Father Bridaine gave us the other day such good receipts for getting rid of all incumbrances upon the way of salvation? ‘No reflections,’ he said. ‘Seize the axe, and let the first stroke, if possible, be an irreparable one, that it may deprive you of all thought of regretting the obstacle, and your adversaries all thought of setting it up again.’ Good! I said to myself; that is the way. It is not exactly your practice, I fancy, in matters of salvation; but at any rate, this axe, this irreparable blow

struck at the outset, made me think of your freak in Guyenne, more, I confess, than I ought to have thought of it during the sermon."

"Poor preachers! while they are sweating with their endeavors to reason firmly, and carry on the minds of their hearers with them, they do not imagine that as they go on, they can bring up all sorts of odd ideas, which will take root there instead of their own."

"It is, in fact, not the first time," said the king, "that I have caught myself during a sermon, a hundred miles away from preacher, sermon, church, and everything around me. As I retraced my steps, I have amused myself by remarking by what a series of jumps my thoughts had gone over the ground. To hinder those excursions is, I should think, one of the greatest, but likewise one of the rarest and most difficult triumphs of the orator. I love secretly to play certain preachers the trick of not following them, but leaving them to fight all alone; but there are some on the contrary, whom I reproach myself, afterwards, for not having followed more closely. Father Bridaine is among this number. He pleased me decidedly. I should like to hear him again, but how shall I? I cannot have him preach at court. It would be a blow to the marquise, the abbé Narniers, the bishop, and all their friends, and—to myself too somewhat."

"Let us go incognito to Paris, and hear him."

"To Paris?—What are you talking about? I never have been there incognito in my life, except to the Opera balls."

"Well? When— But I beg pardon. I believe I was going to say something foolish."

"It appears then that I have just done so."

"Your Majesty?—"

"Well! Did you not decide that you were too good a

servant ever to do anything else but what you have just seen me do?"

"Your Majesty has a good memory."

"And a sharp scent, eh? 'When the devil grew old he became a hermit.' That was the end of your sentence. Confess."

"It is very certain that if it were known that—"

"That the hermit of the *Parc-aux-cerfs*—"

"Went incognito to Paris, it would be little imagined that he went to hear a sermon."

"We will do what we can about it. I will go."

"We will go. Ah! I believe that madame la marquise is coming."

"Do not go and tell her about this, I beg!"

"No, sire."

### X X X V I I I .

MADAME DE POMPADOUR'S BUDGET OF ANECDOTES.—A NEW  
PLAN TO AMUSE THE KING.

The king had been amused for a few moments. He felt the vague pleasure of a sick man who has passed an hour without suffering, or who, on awaking, finds the night further spent than he had ventured to hope.

Madame de Pompadour perceived this slight clearing up at the first glance. Her task of amusing the king was to be a little less difficult than usual this evening. Richelieu received for his trouble, a half glance of gratitude.

She had, for that matter, an ample fund of anecdotes. There were enough for her to relate for an hour at least, and she told a story admirably.

It was about the abbé Coquet, a good old priest, who had been arrested by a sergent who had heard some talk of seizing the *Abbé Coquet*, a villainous little romance which was sold surreptitiously. Or it was a village curé, who was preaching about sudden deaths, and cried: "Thus it is with us. We go to bed well, and get up stone dead!"

Or it was an old councillor, Monsieur d'Herbaut, who, writing to one of his friends of an estate which he has just bought, adds, that there is a chapel upon it, "in which my wife and I wish to be buried, if God spares our lives."

Or it was Monsieur de Zurlauben, a dull savant, whom it was said Mademoiselle de Lussan had described as "an immense library, the librarian of which is a fool."

Or it was the Chevalier de Florian, who going to see the wood work which was being laid down at the Palais-Royal, had put his finger so far into a pine knot that he remained caught there. His rescue had required an hour's labor, to the great jubilation of the duke of Orleans and his court.

Or it was the duchess of Orleans, who had put a guaze cap upon the head of the old baron d'Estélan, who had gone to sleep in her saloon, and allowed him to go to the theatre in this pretty costume.

Or it was the princess de Carignan, who, in the midst of a numerous company, had felt one of her mole skin eyebrows coming off, and had put it on again—but upside down, which made a moustache of it.

"But apropos of the princess de Carignan," said the marquise; "does your Majesty know what happened to her protégé, poor d'Orbigny?"

"D'Orbigny? I saw him yesterday," said the king.

"For the last time, perhaps."

"Ah!"

“He was almost crushed to death, in the Rue Saint-Denis, by one of those new vehicles. You know—”

“A cabriolet?”

“Yes. For this name begins to take, and it is not inapplicable, I assure you.\* Nothing is to be seen in the streets of Paris, but these hopping, jumping machines. The foot passengers do not know what is to become of them.”

“And have there been any others hurt?” asked the king.

“A number,” said Richelieu, “but only commoners. Now here is a gentleman wounded.”

“If I were chief of the police,” said the king, “I would prohibit these cabriolets.”

Was he jesting? No. Every day something or other led him to make the remark that if he were such an one, he would do such a thing. But the courtiers took care not to notice these strange observations. It would have seemed too much as if they perceived his indolence.

“Monsieur de Sartine,” said Richelieu, “has a tolerable amount of business on hand, just now. Thieves are plenty, the *convulsionaries* have again taken to performing miracles; and the actresses are so insolent, that some one of them has to be sent to For-l’Evêque every day.”

“Yes,” said the king, “and at For-l’Evêque the bolts are scarcely drawn after them, before your finest equipages dash up, gentlemen; and the lieutenant of police has more trouble in refusing your petitions in favor of these fine ladies, than to take charge of all the thieves and convulsionaires in Paris.”

“If it were not for us, what would become of the theatre?”

“Oh! go on—go on. Happy are those who have it in their power.”

“Sire,” said the marquise, “it is a long time, it seems to me,

\* *Cabrioler*, verb,—to jump, to cut capers. Tr.



since we have acted anything for you. What would you think of a little representation at Bellevue?"

"In July?"

"Why not? We could have a little theatre arranged in the open air. We would have only a few select guests; only a few of the best musicians. We might play some little piece, *Le Devin de Village*\* for instance, which you liked so much. I have been amusing myself lately by looking over the part I used to play in it. I still know it pretty well."

"You think so?"

He smiled his most malicious smile. *The part which she used to play!* She carried the matter off very well, however: "Yes, sire," she said, in the most innocent tone. "The music is so simple,—so touching. Even your Majesty remembered some of the airs."

It must be observed that Louis XV. had, as Rousseau said, the most wretched voice in his kingdom. He knew it perfectly well, and to remind him of his singing was a very good way to repay him for his epigram.

He went on smiling, however. But suddenly, with a more serious air, he said:

"When shall this fête take place?"

"On Monday, sire."

"Impossible."

She looked at him with some surprise, and as if awaiting an explanation, or at least an excuse. But she received neither the one nor the other.

"Tuesday, then," she continued, in a half-offended, half-uncertain tone.

"Tuesday be it."

He did not hope to conceal from her his expeditior to Paris,

\* The Village Conjuror.

but he wished her at least not to know it beforehand. He asked, moreover, nothing better than to pique her curiosity. It was one of his manias to perplex people.

### XXXIX.

RABAUT'S MEMORIAL.—THE PROTESTANT CLERGY IN FRANCE.—  
THE CATHOLIC CLERGY.—PERSECUTION.

But as he thought again of Bridaine, he remembered another person from whom on the same day, and at the same moment, he had received a paper which he had not seen again. Not that he was in the habit of troubling himself much in regard to the fate of the petitions which he made over to the duke de Richelieu. Accident only, and perhaps also the physiognomy of the unknown petitioner, had helped him to remember Rabaut.

“What became,” he asked, “of the second paper which I received on Sunday?”

“It is not lost, sire; but it treated of such grave matters—”

“Good!—You may speak to me of it another time.”

“Besides, before speaking to your Majesty about it, I thought I ought to send for the author, and gather—”

“Well, well—”

“Only a word more. Did your Majesty observe the person?”

“Why, yes,—I believe so. Who is it?”

“Ah, sire, you would never guess in a thousand chances. It was Rabaut.”

“Rabaut? And pray who is Rabaut?”

“Why, Rabaut, the preacher, the *pope* of the French Huguenots—Rabaut, who has given me more trouble in gov-

erning Languedoc, than all the Huguenots put together—Rabaut, against whom all your soldiers have been sent out for the last twenty years.”

“All very possible. But it is the first time I ever heard the name.”

“Why, all France knows it.”

“All very possible, I tell you. Is this, then, the only thing,” he added, mournfully, “of which I am the only one who knows nothing.”

He was silent a moment, as if reflecting upon the reproach, of which he himself had been the medium. It was, in fact, one of the gravest of all reproaches. Certainly no one had intentionally concealed from him a name so generally known. It was accordingly, only to his absolute carelessness, that his ignorance of it until this moment was to be ascribed.

“It was that Rabaut?” he resumed. “He is brave, certainly. Is there not a penalty of death against these preachers?”

“Undoubtedly, as your Majesty confirmed those of the late king.”

“Yes, I recollect.—I have signed so many things on this subject!\* What kind of man is he?”

“A man who must be seen in order that you may have an idea of him; a soul of iron in a body apparently feeble, but in reality also of iron. An unprecedented mingling of humility in all that regards himself, and of pride in all that concerns his faith.”

\* A pamphlet published in 1736, contains a catalogue of works, purporting to have been published by an editor of Utrecht, and among the number, is a “treatise on silence and timidity, interspersed with notes upon indolence, and the way to sign one’s own name without knowing why,—by S. M. T. C.” (*Sa Majesté Très Chrétienne.*) His most Christian Majesty.

“You have seen him, then?”

“No later than to-day.”

“And where did you find him? For I suppose he did not wait to be traced.”

“On the contrary, sire; he gave his name and address.”

“Extraordinary man! I should like to see him.”

“There is nothing to prevent, sire. He is in my apartments.”

“In yours? Here? At the château! He is not afraid—”

“Of what, sire? By giving his name, he appealed to your honor—and mine. It is a truce. When he has gone back to his mountains, then let the chase begin again. I believe, however, to tell the truth, that he will never be taken. He is so watched, so guarded by these people, that only the most unheard-of chance could make him fall into our hands. Would it be any great gain if he should? I doubt it. In the first place, in spite of the executions, the number of preachers has not ceased increasing. There are now sixty, it is said, and far too well organized for the death of their chief to scatter them. It would only increase their zeal. Then I would not promise that there would not be a general insurrection throughout the province; and you know what it cost, during the last years of the late king, to re-establish quiet there. When I governed in Languedoc, I did all that was possible to have him taken, without concealing from myself that I would be perhaps very sorry to have him found. I knew that every time an attempt at insurrection had been quieted by his exertions, the hatred had only been repressed until the moment when he should be captured. There is, as it were, a tacit arrangement on this point which is positively terrifying.”

“Yes, truly,” replied the king. “And if it were allowed him to quit the country, without having his property confiscated, or his family troubled?”

“It has been proposed to him often enough. More has been done. It was attempted to force him to it. I thought of having his wife and children arrested at Nîmes, and to make his quitting the kingdom the condition of their freedom. Accordingly, one night the house was surrounded by a hundred soldiers. They had orders not to carry out the arrest this time. I thought the fright would be sufficient. One door had accordingly been left open, in order that the wife might escape; but it was soon evident that nothing was to be gained from or through her. She insisted upon remaining. She wished to be arrested, she said, in order that the injustice should be more flagrant. She was at length put out of the house, in order to give her the appearance of having escaped. She wandered about, I know not where, for two years, enduring, with her little children, all sorts of hardships and fatigue, rather than persuade her husband to leave France; advice, for that matter, to which he would certainly not have listened.”

“What became of her?” said the king; for, in spite of himself, he felt interested in this unheard-of heroism of one of his victims.

“She returned at length to Nîmes, where she was left in quiet.”

“What a life,” said the marquise, “is that of these women! They are almost all married,—are they not?”

“Almost all. They even marry generally very young. They find a source of perseverance and courage, it is said, in these unions so surrounded with danger.”

“Which does not agree,” said the king, “with what our church declares, that a priest, unless he is single, cannot be a devout man.”

“Bah!” said Richelieu. “Do we fight any the worse, pray, because we have wives and children? Our priests remain

single because it suits them to do so, in order to have no other interest in the world than that of their caste. And truly those are very devout men, those cassocked bachelors, whom we see crowding around the toilettes of our ladies! People do me the honor, sire, to set me down for a great many affairs of gallantry. I do not know whether they do not even exaggerate a little; but this much I can say, that I have never taken the field in these regions without finding at least one abbé in my way."

"You are very severe, Seigneur Lovelace."

"Perhaps so; but against whom? With all my heart I pardon these poor abbés, who have nothing to do but to consume the fruits of their benefices, even if they do run after the forbidden fruit; but what makes me angry is, to hear the clergy, in spite of this, pretend to the monopoly of virtues and morals. I do not ask that they shall be saints; but let them at least not pretend to remain single in order to be so. If they wish to resemble the rest of mankind, let them do so; but do not let them begin by saying that they belong to a separate class. I have seen the English clergy; I have seen the clergy of the Protestant States of Germany. They will tell you there, in their somewhat abrupt biblical style, 'It is not good for man to be alone.'\* But among so many thousands of ecclesiastics, years pass by without a single scandal being heard of; and when the people wish to see the model of a pure and united family, they have only to go to their pastors."

"Well preached!" said the king. "I should like to assemble the gallant abbés in my dominions, and have them *make a retreat* † under your orders."

\* Genesis, ii. c., 18 v.

† A phrase applied to certain periodical retirements from the world practiced among Roman Catholics. Tr.



“At your service, sire. I am a little uneasy about one thing.”

“What?”

“I fear that there can be no cathedral found large enough to lodge them.”

The king laughed immoderately, the marquise less heartily. As may be imagined, such a subject was not calculated to put her at her ease. In other days, the king would have taken care not to continue it; but since he was now only bound to her by the relaxed ties of old habit, he did not trouble himself so much.

“Do not abuse the abbés of my kingdom too much,” he said. “In the first place, the lower orders of priests are better; and then go and see how things are in Spain, Italy, America, everywhere that the clergy are all-powerful. In the Spanish colonies, the excess of the evil has finally brought a sort of remedy with it,—that is to say, many of the priests have a woman residing with them whom they treat almost like a wife, appearing with her in public; bringing up her children; married, in short, with the exception of the ceremony. For that matter, this was generally the case, but with still more scandal, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. When Calvin and Luther attacked us on these points, they had only to repeat what had for a long time been said even in the church, in books, pamphlets and sermons, everywhere. It must be confessed that they had excuse enough for declaiming against the celibacy of the clergy.”

“Ah ha, sire!” exclaimed Richelieu, “this conversation smells terribly of the faggot! If this Rabaut heard us, I think he might be tempted to ask us why we persecute him and his companions, if we know so well, upon occasion, how to differ in opinion from the church. It is a question which I have

sometimes asked myself, for that matter, particularly when I commanded in Languedoc. Here, I said to myself, are these poor people, who in every other respect are examples to the province. Sober, industrious, saving, they have, in spite of our tormenting, kept themselves very far superior to the surrounding population. The ordinary police has nothing to do, so far as they are concerned. It is a miracle when one of them has to be punished for anything besides his religion. 'Their whole crime,' as Monsieur de Voltaire says, 'is that of praying to God in bad French, instead of doing it in still worse Latin.' And I, who would have scarcely anything to do in the province, if it were entirely peopled with such quiet, submissive inhabitants,—I must persecute them, and harass myself in inventing, every day, some new injury to do them, some new vexation with which to afflict them! What induces me to do it? Do I hate them? No. Do I hate their doctrines? I have been told often enough that I must hate them; but I have never examined into them, and, to judge from their effects, they do not seem to me very abominable. Once more, I ask myself what business I have to persecute these people?"

"You have to execute my edicts," said the king.

"O! sire, that is not the question. Your edicts were never better executed than in my time. The *governor* faithfully performed his duty; the *man* asked himself, privately, if it would not have been more agreeable had his duty been of another nature?"

"That is very nice reasoning, Richelieu," said the king, a little out of humor. "With such reasoning as this, you would soon come neither to obey or to make others obey any longer."

But the ill-humor of the monarch was founded upon quite another cause than the fear of not being obeyed. He too had vaguely asked himself why he persecuted the Protestants; and

while the marshal could at least take refuge behind the edicts of which he had been but the executor, the king beheld himself alone, beneath the weight of a gigantic responsibility. In vain he repeated to himself that he had found the system already established; that he had only carried out the errors of his predecessor. Forty years of persecution, without his ever having asked himself why! This was, of all the weaknesses of his reign, the most odious and the most guilty. The revocation of the edict of Nantes had, since the death of Louis XIV., lost all the grandeur with which that prince knew how to clothe the most monstrous ideas, the most iniquitous measures. Louis XIV. had believed in the possibility of establishing religious unity in France; he had seriously, strongly, obstinately willed it. What had Louis XV. wished? He had never known. He had allowed himself, from childhood to manhood, to follow in the bloody track marked out by his ancestor. Moreover, when Louis XIV. began to persecute the Protestants, he had begun to become a good Catholic; he had given up his irregularities; he had married Madame de Maintenon, and gave to religion, or what he considered religion, a large place in his life. But Louis XV., in the midst of indifference and immorality, had augmented the cruelties of the great king. His hand was weary of signing, even without having read them, edicts which a blind obedience was to transcribe, in letters of blood and fire, on the remotest parts of the kingdom.

## XL.

THE KING WILL SEE RABAUT.—HE WAVERS AS TO HOW HE  
WILL RECEIVE HIM.

Such were the sad reflections which he had been led to make. If he had been the man to make a good resolution on the

spot,—(that for instance, of inquiring seriously into the state of things,) the cause of the Protestants would have been gained. He would of his own accord, accompanied by their blessings, have entered upon the path of toleration into which he allowed himself to be dragged, ten years afterwards, but slowly, and with a bad grace,—far more from weakness and indolence, than from humanity or reason, and without carrying with him to the tomb the gratitude of any being.

After a tolerably long silence, he said : “ Richelieu, I wish to see this man. Go and bring him.”

“ What! sire,” exclaimed the marquise, “ in earnest ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Does your Majesty think of granting their demands ?”

“ I know nothing about that. And you ?”

“ Ah! sire, it would be one of the most glorious days of your reign.”

He looked at her with surprise. Nothing, until now, had ever made him dream of such language from her.

Not because she had never thought of the wretchedness of the French Protestants. But if she thought of them, she thought also, and still more, of herself. She would have been wary of bringing up the subject so long as she saw that the day had not come when she might gain honor and profit from it. Secretly imbued with the liberal doctrines of the age, nothing would have delighted her more than to connect her name with some of the reforms to which the philosophers promised their incense, and she would have been doubly flattered to receive with the praises of the infidels, the blessings of men persecuted for their faith. Add to this the desire of being avenged on the clergy, by whom she looked upon herself as persecuted, and to whom she knew that nothing could be more displeasing than a relaxation of these severities.

She repented however, of having too plainly allowed her intention of acting in this direction to be perceived. The king continued to look at her fixedly, without saying a word. He evidently distrusted her, and himself still more. Because he had allowed edicts of persecution to be dictated to him, he wished not to be dictated to in regard to one of toleration. When a weak man takes it into his head to be firm, it is rarely that he does not happen to choose the wrong time for being so.

“Richelieu,” he resumed, “go and bring this man here. I wish him to hear from my lips—”

The king’s tone was completely changed. Richelieu, who was just quitting the apartment, could not help turning his head at these last words.

“Yes, from my mouth,” he continued, “that there is neither peace nor pardon to be expected for him and his fellows. Ah! you fancy that I shall always be led? You fancy that I shall be made to give a specimen of a king undoing what he has done, contradicting what he has said, and giving back with one hand what he has taken away with the other. No, by heaven, no! No more heretics in France! One king, one people, one religion! Go, Richelieu. Well, madame, I did not request you to retire.”

“I am in the way,—sire.”

“Remain here. You have often enough seen me weak and slavish. Are you afraid to see me king?”

She reseated herself and was silent. Louis XV., as we have already remarked, was not without dignity, but he must not have time to prepare for being dignified, for then he was no longer so. Beneath the air, already rather more scowling than majestic, with which he strode up and down the apartment while he awaited the minister, madame de Pompadour had no difficulty in perceiving the approach of an embarrassment into



which she had always seen him thrown by occasions of this kind, and which was moreover betrayed by a very curious sign,—a violent trembling of the chin. He evidently repented of having sent for Rabaut. He did not feel himself strong enough to look in the face of a man whom his edicts condemned to the scaffold; he felt that a courageous victim always has a superiority over his tyrant.

## XLI.

### RECEPTION OF RABAUT.—HE TAKES HIS DEPARTURE.

And it was not without strong emotion that Rabaut, preceded by the marshal, bent his steps towards the apartment of the king. What is wanted with him by this master whose words have hitherto reached him and his brethren, only as a storm of persecution and death?

Richelieu had declined giving him any particulars. The king had appeared so agitated, so little decided, although he strove to give himself the appearance of being so, that he equally feared terrifying Rabaut by groundless apprehensions, or deluding him with false hopes.

The king was seated. The marquise, at some distance, was reading, or pretending to do so.

The steps of the duke were already heard in the anti-chamber.

“Ah! Good heavens,” said the king, “he will speak to me of his petition—and I have not read it.”

“I will come to your aid,” said the marquise.

“But you have not read it either.”

“Do not be uneasy.”

And thus faded away this attempt at majesty. The actor



again called for his prompter ; the royal puppet himself aided to refasten the strings by which he was to be made to move.

They entered.

“Sire,” said Richelieu, “here is the person who had the honor to present your Majesty with a petition last Sunday.”

Rabaut bowed,—first to the king, then to the marquise.

She blushed at this second salutation. Richelieu, with his hand clenched, cast at him sideways one of those looks which seem to say ; “are you mad ?”

The poor minister, in truth, had imagined himself saluting the queen. He knew, as every one did, what were the morals of the king, but in his simplicity as a provincial and a good man, he could never have gone so far as to imagine him seated beside his mistress, in *his* presence. He had by this time regained all his quiet dignity, and waited respectfully to be questioned by the king.

“It has doubtless been made known to you,” said the king at length, “why you are summoned here.”

“No, sire.”

“Your Majesty did not desire me to do so,” said Richelieu.

“Has your Majesty condescended,” resumed Rabaut, “to glance over the petition which I had the honor to present ?”

“Monsieur,” said the marquise, hurriedly, “you are doubtless not aware that the king is never questioned.”

“I was not aware of it, Madame ;—but my question, sire, was no question. In granting me this audience,—for which I had not dared to hope—your Majesty informs me that my petition has been read.”

“Monsieur,” said the king, “I have no explanation to give ; neither do I grant you an audience. I learned by accident that you were in my palace. I wished that upon your return among your Huguenots,—for my clemency will permit you re-

turn,—you should put an end to the unfounded rumors of toleration which are circulated in order to keep up their courage. Expect nothing. Hope for nothing. New edicts if necessary, shall be added to those which you teach them to violate. Let them give up a resistance which will in future be useless, aimless and without end. Out of the Church there is no peace, no salvation for them,—neither in this world, nor in another.”

Rabaut had raised his head upon hearing the first words. Astonishment, and then indignation and disdain, scarcely restrained by a careless respect, were depicted upon his countenance. The king, in spite of the increasing sharpness of his words, had ceased looking him in the face. His tone, grave and dignified at first, had become that of a man who makes a great effort to speak loudly, and who is the first to be afraid of the noise he makes.

He paused. Rabaut remained motionless. A moment, which seemed an age to the king, passed in the most profound silence.

“You have heard the king’s orders, Monsieur,” said the marquise at length.

“Yes, Madame, and I still doubt whether I have heard aright. Your Majesty—”

“Madame is not the queen,” said Louis XV. precipitately, for it was to the marquise that Rabaut had said *your Majesty*.

It only needed this incident to complete the discomposure of the king. Also disconcerted, but only by the shame of him who had given cause for such a mistake, Rabaut turned towards him with his eyes cast down, and without adding a single word.

Then, as the king did not dismiss him, Richelieu said :

“Speak ; his Majesty has perhaps still a moment to give you.”

“Sire,” he said slowly, “only a word: ‘We ought to obey God, rather than men.’”\*

He bowed once more, but to the king only, and quitted the apartment.

## XLII.

## RABAUT’S MEMORIAL.

“Ha! ha!” cried the marshal, “laughing as loudly as he could;” that is their way! Say what you will to them, and they will throw a verse of the Bible in your teeth,—that was one, I fancy,—and turn on their heel. Extraordinary beings, on my word! For just as your Majesty has seen him,—will he be, if he be taken, at the foot of the gallows. There was one of them, however, who grew weak in the presence of death. It was one Molines, of Nîmes, sometimes called *Fléchier*, because, it seems, he wrote sermons in the style of the late academician. The eve of his punishment, this fine speechifier trembled. He offered to become Catholic. His offer was accepted, and great rejoicings were made. And now my rascal is in Holland, more Protestant than ever!”

“And is he the only one who has faltered?” asked the king.

“There was also a certain Duperron, of Grenoble, in ’45. But he died shortly afterwards, a prey to the most frightful remorse.\* It is an unexampled obstinacy.”

\* Acts v. 29.

\* Molines was still alive in 1778, but a prey to all the agonies of remorse which had killed Duperron. A man who knew him has left us some details of this long agony. “When very young, I remember to have seen him many and many a time come to my father, a pastor in Amsterdam, accusing himself bitterly; while my father always strove to make him understand that through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, he might hope for salvation, like any other repentant sinner. He never

“Oh yes, Richelieu, I know examples of it.”

“What are they, sire?”

“Those martyrs of the early ages who are now upon our altars were also famously obstinate.”

The king might have added, that the persecutions of the early Christians, although far more cruel, undoubtedly, than Voltaire asserts, were, nevertheless, neither so long continued, nor so tenacious, nor so odiously refined, as those organized by Catholicism.

“Yes,” he continued, “famously obstinate,—these men who preferred to suffer a thousand deaths rather than consent—to what? To a very small thing, a mere nothing—to throw a few grains of incense in the fire, before the image of a god or an emperor. And we admire them, Richelieu.—And we are right.—And because we believe those of the present time to be in error, are they very different, in the sight of God, from those martyrs of old? Are we in fact much wiser than the pagans, because in place of attacking a new God, we have for the last two hundred years been bent upon persecuting a new method of adoring the same God?”

“Sire,” said the duke, “permit me to decline following you in the changes of opinion to which it appears your Majesty is about to submit. I confess, that if it were permitted me to entertain the sentiments which your Majesty has just expressed, and if I were king, the Protestants of my States would

came and seated himself silently among us, waiting that my father, for the hundredth time, should repeat to him the words of consolation,—without my feeling a kind of terror. I walked around him in a circle as large as the size of the room would permit, but without for an instant losing sight of him. He was so absorbed by his own feelings, that he took no notice of anything whatever. Thirty years of repentance seemed to him but a day and insufficient to weep over his crime.”

M. CHATELAIN. *Religious paper of the canton de Vaud.* 1840.

soon be at the end of their troubles. One would think, besides, that your Majesty was quoting a page of the petition in question, for everything you said is there almost in the same terms."

"You must show me this petition."

"I have it with me, sire. Here it is."

"Well, read it to us, marquise."

She obeyed.

"SIRE,—One of the consolations which we have in our sufferings, is the thought that your Majesty is ignorant of them, that your Majesty is deceived in regard to us, and that we might have a king who would love if he but knew us.

"But, sire, what way have we of making ourselves known to your Majesty? Among the numerous petitions or memorials which we have had laid at the foot of your throne by different hands, we have not heard that a single one has been placed before your Majesty."

"It is true," murmured the king.

"I beg pardon, sire," said Richelieu. "I have never come from Languedoc without my hands full of them; and as I had promised to deliver them to your Majesty, I did so."

The king did not reply. He had never read them; he had not even looked to see what they were about.

Madame de Pompadour continued:

"—— Will this meet with a different fate? It will be presented to you by one of the men who has the most audaciously braved your laws. If he dares to present himself before you, it is because he is conscious of having had all the respect for royal authority which it can claim without infringing upon the authority of God.

"It is long since there has been or can be any idea among us of claiming either privileges, guarantees, subsidies, or any-



thing which it was concluded to grant us in times of disturbance or war. We ask but to live in peace, mingling with the rest of your subjects, and supporting, as we now do, all the charges of the State, without asking in return anything but the liberty to serve God as our consciences dictate.

“These are the terms in which we wish that the question should be presented to the mind, and particularly to the heart, of your Majesty. Everything, for a century past, proves to us that we have scarcely any real and irreconcilable enemies save in the ranks of the clergy. Among all others, the most pious men advocate toleration, some openly, others in the depths of their hearts. We are persecuted,—and we venture to hope that your Majesty is not an exception,—far less from hatred—”

“Just what you were saying, Richelieu,” interrupted the king.

“Yes, sire; but I thought so long before I read that.”

“I did not; but they are right. Go on.”

“—far less from hatred than from an old impulse of hatred—from a suspicion which has long been unfounded—from principles which become every day more relaxed in regard to other matters, and which are only kept up in full force against us in order that it may appear that they are not altogether abandoned. We can understand that your Majesty, being attached to the doctrines of the Roman Church, would prefer to have children of that church alone for your subjects; but we implore you to consider whether the severity of the means employed in your name is not disproportionate to the small degree of antipathy with which we really inspire you.

“Moreover, we do not come at this time to defend ourselves before you. We shall not remind you of the part which we bore in the events which elevated the house of Bourbon to the throne, nor the unshaken fidelity which we have always



manifested towards it, nor the distinguished men we have had the honor of giving to France. We shall commence no discussion of the motives which induce us to hold fast the religion of our fathers, nor of the right which is assumed to be in possession of those who would force us to abandon it. We wish only to lay before you a statement, brief as possible, of the system of laws which oppresses us. We are convinced that your Majesty has never looked upon it as a whole, and that you would have turned away with horror from a system so cruelly monstrous.

“ ‘ In the first place, if we examine its foundations we see that for forty-five years they have reposed upon a fact which is manifestly no fact. Louis XIV., a few months before his death, thought himself authorized to affirm that there were no longer any Protestants in France. “ *Their presence in our States,*” he says in a last manifesto against them, “ *is a sufficient proof that they have embraced the Catholic religion, without which, they would not have been allowed to remain.*” These words, sire, were signed, as is long since universally admitted, without having been read by your ancestor.

“ ‘ Whatever might be his antipathy against us, however deceived he might have been as to the results of his efforts, he had too much sense to believe we were all converted,\* and above all, to consider as a proof of this, the single fact that we remained in France; when we were forbidden to attempt quitting France, under penalty of the galleys.

\* In 1698, thirteen years after the conversion, in a body, of the Protestants, with which Louis XIV. had been deluded, Monsieur de Bâville, the intendant, writes: “ There are districts of more than twenty parishes, in which the curé is the most unhappy and useless of the inhabitants, and where, in spite of all the pains which have been taken, not a single conversion could be made, nor a single Catholic from without established.” Quoted by Monsieur Breteuil, in 1786, in his memorial to Louis XVI.

“However this may be, this has been, ever since that time, the starting point of all the measures taken against us. In order better to harden themselves to the work of mangling us, our tormentors had pronounced us dead.

“We were accordingly no longer called Protestants, or Huguenots, or heretics, but *new converts*. From that period, as we were supposed to be Catholics, all decrees in regard to Protestantism placed us under terrible penalties, already decreed against whosoever, after having abjured, should again become a Protestant. Until that time, so long as there had been no formal abjuration, we were at least permitted to die in peace. Since the edict of 1715, as we were all asserted to have abjured, no one of us on his death-bed can refuse the sacraments without being looked upon as a *relapsed heretic*. If he should be restored to health he must go to the galleys; if he die, the action is carried on against his memory. His goods are confiscated and his body dragged upon a hurdle. Woe be to him also, who may have counselled the dying man to follow the dictates of his conscience! If it be a man, he is condemned to the galleys; if a woman, to solitary confinement for life. In your armies every one is at liberty to be an infidel; but if a soldier should die, as it happened at Uzés, declaring himself to be a Protestant, it is immediately decreed “that there will be an action against his memory.” And this is not, as might be supposed, the decision of some obscure provincial tribunal, or of some fiery intendant. It is a decree of your council of State.

“False in its statements, cruel in its consequences, the allegation of the last edict of Louis XIV. did not even agree with its predecessors. The parliament of Paris remarked this, and the registering of the edict was delayed a month. “The king,”

said the attorney-general,\* “never exactly commanded the Huguenots to become Catholics; it cannot therefore be said that this change is to be taken for granted. All the rigor of the law falls upon the *relapsed converts*, namely upon those who after having abjured, have fallen back into their errors; but it is first necessary to prove that they have ever quitted these errors, for in order to *fall back* one must have first arisen. It will always be difficult to conceive how a man who does not appear ever to have been converted, could have *fallen back* into heresy, and how he could have been condemned as if the fact were proved.”

“Thus were trodden under foot, in this too famous edict, together with the feelings of human nature, the first rules of written law, and even those of common sense.

“These representations, however, either never reached the monarch, or were unable to modify the all powerful-influence which had induced him to sign the edict. The plan of Father Letellier was to remain in full force. The edict was registered. Those who had pointed out its errors, were the first to put it into execution.

“Such, sire, was the heritage left you by your ancestor.

“In your edict of 1724, which your extreme youth at that time, happily allows us to consider as not your work,† you de-

\* D'Aguesseau.

† It was that of Lavergne de Tressan, archbishop of Rouen, aided, (for the fact is only too well ascertained,) by the same d'Aguesseau then become chancellor. So hard does the Roman Church make the hearts of her champions, even of the wisest and most virtuous! It may be seen in particular, in his *Discourse* upon the life of his Father, with what complacency he expatiates upon the severities of which the latter when intendant of Languedoc, had been the instrument. He censures the *dragonades*; but with this exception, looks upon all as legitimate, great and fine.

clared it to be y<sup>r</sup> wish that all the laws already promulgated against us, should be maintained in full force. You added to them at the same time numerous particulars tending to co-ordinate them. It was you, sire, who definitely established the cruel code which harasses us in our belief, in our temporal interests, in our family affections, in the minutest details of all which, in this world, is precious or sacred to us.

“ ‘ In our belief, we say :

“ ‘ You have been doubtless led to believe, as was the late king, that it was not exactly intended to do violence to our consciences ; that it was only purposed to bring us by these hardships to reflect upon our obstinaey, and to re-enter, but of our own good will, into the bosom of the Church.

“ ‘ And in fact, since the persecutions prior to the Edict of Nantes, there has been no punishment individually levelled against the heretic as a heretic. Accordingly, when we are punished, it is not as Protestants professing an erroneous belief, but as disobeying your ordinances.

“ ‘ It is accordingly, not the inquisition ; but in reality what is wanting to make it the same ? Is it not exactly equivalent to it, if we are punished, not as heretics, but as violators of laws made against us because we are so ? We are not commanded to believe ; we are only commanded to profess belief. But sire, in all matters in which conscience is concerned, it is doing violence to conscience itself to force a mere external profession. Unless you tell a dying man that he is at liberty to lie to God and men, you cannot order him to appear to be a Catholic without ordering him from that very fact to be one. Is this an order which your Majesty feels it in your power to give ? Or, if we may be allowed to reverse the question, do you feel that it would be possible for you, o<sup>n</sup> your death-bed, to obey any one who required you to profess another faith not your own ?

And if you knew, moreover, that you could not disobey without condemning yourself to the galleys, and your children to beggary, would not this pretended respect for your faith seem to you a cruel irony?

“We are accordingly reduced to appeal, as to a protecting law, to the very edict in which your ancestor revoked that of Henry IV. The last clause, in fact, prohibits our being molested. Provided that we no longer had pastors, nor churches, nor public worship, we were permitted to remain what we were, enjoying our own property, and following the course of our own business, *“without being hindered or troubled on account of religion.”*

“Thus spoke Louis XIV. in October, 1685; and less than a month after, on the fifth of November, we were already under another law. “His Majesty,” wrote Monsieur Louvois to the commandants of the province, “desires that those who will not embrace his religion, shall be subjected to the extreme rigors of the law; and those who may wish to have the foolish glory of being the last to embrace it, ought to be driven to the last extremity.”

“Shall we relate how these conversions in a body were obtained, upon which was soon to be founded the law which commands us all to be looked upon as converts or relapsed?

“So many Catholics have censured the dragonades, that we need not draw attention to the strangeness or odiousness of such a proceeding.

“Are they at least discontinued? It is generally believed that they are, and yet, sire, this is not the case. Every year, or nearly every year, they have been tried in some portion of our unhappy provinces. Quite recently, in 1758, they were renewed in all the southern ones with terrible vigor. It is only by means of the compulsory quartering of dragoons and



horsemen of the patrol that the consent of so many of our people has lately been forced from them, to have their children baptized in your Church.

“‘But it is most especially our assemblies which have been the objects of the most constant, the severest persecution.

“‘Here, we feel that we are not so clearly upon the inviolable grounds of conscience and belief. God is everywhere; everywhere He may be adored and served. Your Majesty has a right to desire that numerous assemblies should not take place in your States without your authorization.

“‘Ah! sire, our answer is in what we have suffered, and still suffer every day in disobeying you upon this point. The necessity of sympathizing and feeling in common,—a necessity which is so universal and so pressing even in common life—is so strengthened by persecution, that neither threats, nor tortures, nor anything in the world can repress it. We had more than five hundred places of worship before our days of suffering. These have all been destroyed. We pass by the venerated spots where our fathers worshipped, without even daring to cast a glance of regret towards them; we go to seek at a distance, beneath the vault of heaven, that which we found in our happier days within the humble walls of our churches. This is our crime, sire; this is what has sent so many of our brethren to the galleys, so many of our pastors to death; this is what is to be for an indefinite length of time the cause of the same severities, for we feel that it is not in our power to cease incurring them. As the storm howls more loudly, we feel more deeply the need of clinging closely to one another; wherever it shall not be found utterly impossible for us to meet together, there shall we meet. This is not a bravado, sire; God forbid! None of your subjects desire more earnestly than we do, not to be obliged to disobey you.



We only unveil our hearts to you now ; we supplicate you to consider how deeply rooted are those principles which you endeavor to tear from them. Ah ! if the feelings of love which we bear for our king and for our France were not also deeply rooted, think you it would be possible for us still to see in you a father, and in this land our country ?

“ ‘ Laws such as these are not alone cruel ; they have besides the disadvantage of only being applied as it were, at a venture. If some of our number are punished for having been present at one of our reunions, a thousand, two thousand, ten thousand who have shared their crime, do not share their punishment. Is it proper, is it wise,—even setting aside all considerations of justice,—that there should be in a State, laws which strike blindly, never reaching more than two guilty individuals in a hundred ? What license is given to the arbitrary will of the men charged with their execution ! Justice itself in such a shape would become injustice.

“ ‘ Has the attempt at least been made practically to amend the defects inherent to such a state of things ?

“ ‘ On the contrary.—According as the laws became more severe, you suppressed the protecting delays of ordinary justice. When Monsieur de Bâville, in 1698, was seen in one morning, to condemn as many as seventy-five Protestants to the galleys, it might have been imagined that we had endured the utmost degree of oppression. This was a mistake, sire ; we are now still lower. At this time the law reached those only who had been arrested in the act of attending an assembly ; but since 1745 the same penalty has been extended to all those, says the law, *who are known to have been present* at these meetings. Further still : According to the old law, the intendant could judge only in the presence of seven doctors of the law. You have deprived us of this last guarantee. Since

this same edict of 1745, the intendant presides alone, and gives the final judgment himself, without appeal. We must go back to the periods of the most bitter persecutions by the pagans, in order to find examples of such absolute power committed to the hands of a simple governor.

“Masters of our life and liberty, the intendants are also masters of our property.

“Their arbitrary power is in this matter exercised without restraint. In the bosom of France, in the eighteenth century, there are still people *liable to taxation and statute labor, at pleasure*. These unhappy wretches, for whom the rights of property are in fact annihilated,—are ourselves.

“And there are none of us who are not constantly suffering under one or another of the pecuniary penalties specified in your edicts. It would require too much time to mention these in detail. Besides, all former stipulations are now combined in one, which, if it were executed literally, would be equivalent to the entire confiscation of all that we possess in the kingdom. The intendant has had conferred upon him the right of arbitrary taxation, without appeal, of *all* the Protestants of a district in which an assembly has been held, including even those who can prove that they were not present. In case of the capture of a minister, a fine is fixed, each head of a family is taxed at three thousand livres, which is more than the whole possession of a great number of us, who inhabit our barren mountains.

“The intendants generally recoil from the odious task of thus at a single blow redeeming the inhabitants of a village, a district, an entire province to beggary; but they cannot always avoid it. Accordingly, every year some of our districts are burdened with enormous fines; every day, any one of them is liable to have the same burden laid upon it. Many a one is

well off in the morning, who in the evening may perchance no longer possess food or shelter.

“ ‘ This money, scarcely out of our hands, serves to pay for new means of oppression. It goes to the convents to answer for the support of our wives, our daughters, who are dead to us ; it goes to the prisons to reward our gaolers ; to the garrisons to stimulate the zeal of the soldiers ; it is offered, in short, to who ever shall give notice of an assembly, facilitate the capture of a minister, or inform either publicly or secretly, in regard to some infraction of the edicts. Informers and traitors are openly encouraged, openly paid. The first and simplest notions of honor, honesty and even pity are asserted to be criminal. There is not only money for those who will turn informers ; but there are also punishments for such as refuse to do so. If a fugitive minister comes and knocks at our door, we must hasten to give him up to the executioner or we ourselves must go to the galleys. Ah ! it is a great consolation, sire, to be able to feel upon listening to the sentence, that these men who condemn us according to an edict, for having done thus, would have condemned us in their hearts if we had done otherwise. But what kind of a law is it which forces judges to punish that which in all other things they would look upon as honorable and natural ? In the sight of the immutable laws of reason and humanity, what difference is to be perceived between one of the early Christians hiding a fellow-believer from the rage of the proconsuls, and a Protestant of our day concealing his pastor from the search of an intendant ?

“ ‘ There are unhappily many other points, sire, in which your edicts agree no better with these eternal laws, of which you would be the first, in all other matters, to condemn the violation.

“ ‘ What shall we say of the blows aimed at paternal authori-

ty and all family ties as well as affections. Our children do not belong to us. Not only must we send them, under penalty of enormous fines, to Catholic schools,\* but we are forbidden to make any resistance to the efforts made for their conversion. After the age of seven they are allowed to abjure, and to this also we are forbidden to offer any opposition. The abjuration, even when unfairly obtained, is irrevocable. Frequently this is not waited for. As soon as it is *asserted* that an inclination has been perceived in any child to become Catholic, it is lawful to take him from his parents, in order, as it is said, to prevent these precious germs from being destroyed. In this way, sire, none of our children are safe, no father is sure of embracing those in the evening, upon whom in the morning he has bestowed his benediction. And there is nothing fixed, nothing regulated in the exercise of this frightful power. Bishops, governors, intendants, delegates or under delegates, simple curés, private individuals,—it requires the merest pretext in order to invest any or every one of these with it. The magistrates never refuse to sanction anything which has been inspired by so noble a zeal!”

### XLIII.

#### SOFTENING EFFECTS.

“It is infamous!” cried the king.

Madame de Pompadour had followed in his face the effects

\* In the midst of all the zealous interest for the poor peasants lost among their mountains, it should be known what was taking place in Paris. “The holy archbishop De Beaumont *suddenly discovered* not only that the fish women (*femmes de la Halle*), never sent their children to be catechised, but that they themselves had not the least notion of religion or morals, because their mothers and grandmothers had never been instructed in ‘hese.” MADAME DE GENLIS. *Dictionnaire des Mœurs*.

of what she read. In order to remain neutral, she had begun by reading as calmly as possible. Gradually, whether she had allowed herself to be carried away, or whether, as was more probable, she had seen that there was no risk in appearing moved, she had lent to the bitter sufferings of the oppressed Huguenots, all the charm and all the art with which she knew so well how to improve the paltry products of the muse of that day. The marshal, on his part, no longer sought to conceal his sympathy. A simple description of sufferings endured, would have made less impression on him; but this tissue of iniquities revolted his ideas as a gentleman, his chivalry as an old soldier. He would have better understood the extermination of the Protestants, than these infernal machinations of a tyranny at once mean and atrocious.

She went on.

“— Behold, sire, the deplorable state to which you have reduced so large a number of your most faithful subjects. You have set aside, in your laws against them, all those principles, which elsewhere you hold yourself bound to proclaim; you have torn from your heart those feelings which you would blush to forget towards your greatest enemies. Yes, we repeat it, and your Majesty will not contradict us; you would blush to labor at the enfeebling of a nation with which you were at enmity, by encouraging treason in the midst of it, by breaking family ties, in torturing, by means of all that they hold most dear, those of it who refused to concur in your plans. In the midst of real wars, if a man had proposed to you to publish against England or Prussia some manifesto analogous to your edicts against us,—you would have ejected him from your council as an enemy of your glory, and you would have felt yourself obliged to protest, in the hearing of all Europe, against



the insult of which this man would have been guilty in supposing you capable of listening to his proposal.

“‘So cruel and unrighteous a set of laws can accordingly have been conceived only by men who are accustomed to look upon all as good which leads to the desired end. We know not, sire, we wish not to know, to whom we owe your severities. We only ask, in conclusion, one thing. Let your Majesty take at random, from one of your edicts, or from one of those of the late king, any one of the stipulations to which we have called his attention. Let your Majesty present it, in the form of a general question, to these same men who approved of it in its application to us; and if there is a single one who says; This is good; this is wise and just,—we will then no longer complain, we will bow our heads forever beneath any yoke which it may be thought proper to impose upon us.

“‘But no, sire; leave all these hard-hearted counsellors to their pitiless prejudices. In this matter consult only yourself, your reason, your heart. Consider whether it is not time that our sufferings should end, that our chains should fall, that we should recover our rights, if not as citizens, at least as men; consider whether it is really your conscience which leads you to offer us as a holocaust to the ill-will of a power whose ambition you fear. Your ancestor was never more terrible towards us, than when he was on the worst terms with the court of Rome; all that he refused the pope in homage and submission, he repaid in Huguenot blood. Is not this, in more than one respect, the secret of our misfortunes? And if there are some who hate us because they are very Catholic, are there not very many also who constitute themselves our persecutors because they are so little Catholic? Their zeal may serve as an excuse to the first; but what a fearful account will the latter be obliged to render to their God!’”



## XLIV.

## AN EDICT.

“Is that all?” asked the king.

“It is all, sire”

“Well, marquise, write:

“To Monsieur the duke de Choiseul.

“I am of opinion, cousin, that there is somewhat, and indeed very much to be modified in the manner in which the members of the religion called reformed, are treated in my kingdom. A memorial has been handed me, which shows me that we have gone too far, and that my real intentions have been exaggerated, in the edicts which I have been caused to put forth. I see further, that with all the measures which I have been induced to take, and all those which might still be taken, two or three centuries of severities would perhaps not be sufficient to attain the end which I had proposed to myself.

“My intention is, accordingly, that these should be given up. Draw me up the plan of an edict, in which—”

The king stopped.

“An edict!—That is very difficult. What will the clergy say? What will the pope say? An edict!—No.—We will send secretly to the intendants, the order to drop the present ones. But—suddenly?—What will be said?”

Such was Louis XV. He recoiled before the first difficulties.

“What will be said?” he resumed. “They might cry upon this occasion, *Dédit* of the king.\* No.—No edict—no orders. I will leave it for my successor.”

\* This was a witticism of Monsieur de Cury, a wit by profession, and

“In that case,” said Richelieu, “the Protestants must have patience. So much the more so because Monseigneur the dauphin is not very friendly to them.”

“Suppose your Majesty should speak to the duke de Choiseul?” said the marquise, laughing. “He has drawn up more edicts than your Majesty. Perhaps he could arrange it to everybody’s satisfaction.”

“The bigots included?”

“No—but all reasonable people.”

“That is to say scarcely any one.”

“At least try.”

“Let us try, then. Send for the duke.”

“This evening?”

“This evening. I wish to put an end to the thing. To think that I can by a word, restore peace and happiness to thousands of men, can deserve their blessings!—”

“Yes.—It is a noble thing to be a king, sire.”

“You think so?” said Louis XV. bitterly. “A fine thing, indeed, on my honor, to discover at the end of forty-five years, that one has been the tyrant and butcher of a great part of his subjects! Shall we sup, marquise?”

“And the duke de Choiseul, sire? I have just ordered that he should be sent for.”

“So much the worse. What was I thinking of? Do you know that I have already spent two hours with him and the comptroller general?”

well known to the king. At the time of the disputes with the Parliament, when they were selling in the streets an edict in which the king had begun to retract, he said to one of the criers that it was not an *Edit*, (edict,) but a *Dédit*, and the man, who did not know how to read, went about crying *Dédit*, until he was stopped by the police.

(*Edit*, in French, signifies something *said*, *dédit*, signifies something *unsaid*. Tr.)

She knew it, for Choiseul never omitted seeing her before and after his interview with the king. But the king must not know that they so constantly played into each other's hands. They had the art of agreeing without seeming to have preconcerted it, and thus the king, whom distrust alone could lead to have an opinion of his own, ran no risk of adopting any other than their's.

"Has your Majesty worked with him during the day?" she asked.

"Two hours, I tell you; and such work! Adding up millions."

"And your Majesty objects to that?" said Richelieu.

"Millions of deficit, Marshal. Every year worse. When Choiseul showed me this gulf, I thought I should become dizzy. We receive one hundred and seventy-two millions; we spend three hundred and fifty-seven.—Count up."

"But there must be some mistake, sire."

"Not at all. The total of our receipts is three hundred and twelve millions. Of this, one hundred and forty millions are already pledged. Deficit, one hundred and twenty-five millions. It is plain enough. Five hundred thousand livres a day, if you like it better."

"What is that for France?"

"Oh, ho! you also belong to the number?"

"Of what, sire."

"Of those designated by the court of accounts in its last remonstrance. There,—read. Here on this page."

Richelieu took the paper and read:

"Your Majesty cannot too much distrust those who, in order to quench the insatiable thirst which they have for your gifts—"

"I have never asked for anything," said the duke, pausing.

“No—you have only taken—without asking”

“Sire!”

“Come! we will not grow angry! It was in Germany that you took, I know,—not in France. Have I ever seemed to owe you a grudge for it? But finish the sentence. It was the end of it I thought of, when I gave it to you to read.”

“‘——magnify to you the wealth of the nation. The zeal of your subjects is inexhaustible, but their ability does not equal their zeal.’

“There they are, the insolent scoundrels,” said the duke, as he returned the paper to the king. “With what do they want us to carry on the war?”

“They would prefer that we should not carry it on at all. But as we cannot give them this satisfaction just at present, we have contrived another. I have just ordered that my plate should be carried to the mint.”

“That is great and magnanimous, sire.”

“Yes?—Then I have no doubt I shall be imitated. You, and all the court with you, will receive to-morrow an invitation to do the same. Well, what is the matter? One would think that you did not approve of the arrangement.”

And in fact this blow had somewhat stunned him. For the plate of the noble duke was indeed very magnificent. But he soon recovered.

“To the mint, then!” he exclaimed.

And his decision was made. The next morning there was no longer a dish in his possession. As we have said, all that he took or received with one hand, he was always ready to give back with the other for the king and for *la France*.

## XLV.

## A BANKRUPT GOVERNMENT.

But it was very curious to contemplate this government, which regularly every year devoured half the income of the next. *Curious*, we say, for there were still very few persons who looked upon it as terrifying. The deficit had become the normal state of things. People had grown accustomed to it in time of peace, and it was found natural that it should be doubled during the war.

Not that the parliaments in their remonstrances, and the political economists in their books, neglected to attack such a state of things; the government had not yet thought of doing as it concluded to do four years afterwards at the petition of the comptroller general Laverdy, namely, to prohibit all publications in regard to the finances. But it was with their warnings as with those of the pulpit; many did not listen to them; and many although they listened could not become alarmed. The longer the car had been rolling on towards the abyss, the more they seemed to imagine that it would roll on for an indefinite length of time. The king, in spite of his listlessness, was at times one of those who was the most concerned at it. "What would a merchant do," he once asked the abbé Terray, "if he should see his affairs in the same state as mine?" "He would go and drown himself, sire," said the abbé.

And accordingly the gloomy king drowned himself after his own fashion. He blunted as well as he could, by the distractions of dissipation, the consciousness of this overwhelming ruin, of which he had neither the courage, nor the strength, nor even the desire to become the reformer.

Since the time of Colbert, the cardinal de Fleury alone had drawn up a budget in which the expenses,—at least on paper,—did not surpass the receipts; and he had succeeded in this only on account of a long peace, and by considerably reducing the army, and giving up the navy.

In the budget of 1726, the expenses were reduced to one hundred and eighty-two millions, a sum equal and even inferior to that of the ordinary receipts.

This total, which may be considered very small, was far from being as small as it seems.

In the first place, one hundred and eighty-two millions was at that time equivalent to at least three hundred millions of our money.

In the second place, the population has doubled. These three hundred millions would accordingly be equivalent to six hundred.

Finally a great number of expenses defrayed at the present time by the central exchequer, were then defrayed by the provinces. Thus, for instance, in this same budget of 1726, the public works were set down at only four millions.

To make amends, however, in spite of reductions which had appeared exorbitant, the king's household figures there still for twenty-one millions, (thirty-two or three of the present time; nearly one hundred thousand francs a day.) Now the king in 1726, was Louis XV., then sixteen years old, already married, but without children, without mistresses, without expensive tastes, and respectfully submissive to the old minister who had laid out the plan of expenses. With the dominion of the passions all must change. The fixed and acknowledged expenses will receive but little increase. The king will even consent willingly to their reduction, and it will be no sacrifice to him, for splendor wearies him. He feels himself lost in the



immense galleries of his ancestor ; he belittles to the best of his ability, the palace of Louis XIV. But when he is seen to retrench a million in the expenditures which at least serve to keep up the dignity of the crown,—it is a sign,—alas !—that he is going to throw away two, if not more, through those channels in which is lost, together with the royal gold, all the royal dignity. And besides, you may be almost certain that these very economies which he allows to be trumpeted abroad, will never be put into execution. He has not courage to carry out those which are worth it ; he is told that it is not worth his while to trouble himself about the smaller ones ; and, in fact, a few crowns clipped from so many millions, would be a mere farce. If the poverty arrive at its height, he will throw his plate into the furnaces of the mint, but he will not give up a louis of the expenses of the *Parc-aux-Cerfs*.

This very day, the alarming results of the comptroller-general's calculations had not prevented his returning to the subject of his gaming funds, in the presence of the duke de Choiseul. We have already heard that Monsieur de Silhouette had succeeded in inducing him to give these up ; and we have seen how heavily the privation weighed upon him. Three or four days after he had given it up he had begun to devise means of recovering it. He dared not claim it again. Monsieur de Silhouette was a grave personage ; and, moreover, the public were acquainted with the transaction. The king had been commended, the minister still more so. So that in this direction there was nothing to be effected.

The king had accordingly consulted the duke de Choiseul. "We shall see,"—the duke had said ; but he asked nothing better than to set the king once more upon his old track. It was a piece of good fortune to have it in his power to perform such a service for the king, and Choiseul had accordingly

almost promised to supply him with the necessary funds. So that the king, after having sent for him on quite a different business, thought only of the money when his minister arrived.

He led him into his cabinet.

“Well, Monsieur the duke, what news?”

“Despatches from Germany—”

“Ah! from Germany—” said the king, in the tone of a man who receives quite a different answer from that which he had expected.

General news,—grave, important news, be it understood, interested him but little. He would at any time willingly lose the thread of an important communication in order to hear an anecdote from the city. “We have news from Bavaria,” he wrote one day to Madame de Châteauroux. “It bears date the 13th of December; *but I have not seen it yet.*” And this was written the 3d of January. Madame de Châteauroux, who aspired to play the part of Agnes Sorel, was excessively annoyed at this strange indifference; Madame de Pompadour, on the contrary, drew her own advantage from it.

The king appeared to care little for knowing the contents of the despatches; but the minister was willing to let him remain in suspense a little longer, in regard to what he so much wished to know.

“Yes, sire, from Germany. It appears that everything goes on tolerably well. The campaign commenced rather late in June.”

“Which was ridiculous enough,” said the king.

“Provisions were scanty, transportation difficult.”

“According to the contractors.”

“Perhaps so, but the marshal de Broglie is established in Hesse. They are now putting Hanover under contribution.”

“Poor Hanover! After Richelieu, Broglie! Has an engagement taken place?”

“Yes, near Clostercamp.”

“The whole army?”

“One corps only, commanded by the marquis de Castries. They relieved Wesel, which the duke of Brunswick was upon the point of taking. He came very near beating us.”

“And these contributions,” said the king, “which they are levying in Hanover,—are we to have none of them?”

“No, sire. We think ourselves very fortunate that they serve to defray a part of the expenses of the army.”

“But, I suppose there will at least be something to deduct from the allotted sum?”

“On the contrary, the calculations have already proved too small. We shall be obliged to add several millions.”

“But at any rate, have you some money for me? Am I to be the last one served?”

“Your Majesty can command anything. But you are aware, sire, how many eyes are fixed upon you at this time.”

“You say that the duke of Brunswick came very near beating us?”

“And he would have beaten us, sire, if it had not been for the admirable devotion of an officer of the regiment of Auvergne, the chevalier d’Assas.”

“Another one to be paid,” murmured the king.

“No, sire; he is dead.”

“Ah!”

“They were about to fall into an ambuscade. D’Assas, who marched at the head of the column, found himself suddenly surrounded by enemies. They ordered him to be silent or he was a dead man. ‘To the rescue!’—he shouted,—‘these are enemies.’ And he fell pierced with a thousand wounds.”

But the king had something else to do besides admire those who lost their lives for him. He wanted his gaming funds ; and he returned to the subject with the pertinacity of a child who resists too long a refusal. The minister perceived that unless he wished to put the king's gratitude out of the question, this was the moment to yield.

"Sire," he said, "having taken all things into consideration, I have found that it will perhaps not be impossible to gratify your wish. A few private retrenchments from the funds of my department\* would indemnify you for what you have thought fit to give up."

"And no one will know of it?"

"No one."

"And when they see that I play?"

"The king is not obliged to give explanations of his actions."

He accepted. Two days afterwards, the affair was public. Who had betrayed the secret? The minister perhaps; perhaps the king himself, without suspecting it. But he continued to imagine that no one saw any harm in it;—and as stolen fruit is always sweeter, it is said, than that of one's own trees,—he had never played with more pleasure than with this money purloined from diplomatic intrigues.

## XLVI.

### THE KING AND HIS MINISTER.

But to return to the edict. Once satisfied, the king appeared rather more disposed to talk about business. He inquired about the details of the campaign, recurred to the death of d'Assas, and spoke of him with commendation. He even

\* Foreign affairs.

made a memorandum of some observations to be suggested to the count de Belle-Isle, the minister of war. In short, he thought of everything except the subject in regard to which he had sent for the minister.

But as the duke was leaving him, the king cried :

“ Ah! I was forgetting. You are to draw me up an edict, if you please, in regard to the Protestants.”

“ But, sire, all the measures which can possibly be taken against them, have been taken.”

“ I did not say against them.”

“ It is to be then—”

“ What your friends the encyclopedists require. What, does it not suit you?”

“ It is a very serious matter, sire.”

“ And therefore, you see that I charge you with it, and not the count de Saint-Florentin, whose business it would be.”

“ It is a great honor, sire; but—”

He was greatly embarrassed. To object to it, would be to deny the principles which the king knew to be his; yet it did not suit him at the present moment to change anything in regard to the old severities. We have seen that it was peculiarly necessary for him to contrive a reply to give to any one who might accuse him of weakening Catholicism; that he particularly, must seek to cover with the ancient drapery of intolerance, all that he began to dare against the old Romish spirit. Moreover, he was not a man to torment himself by thinking of the sufferings which must necessarily be continued by this policy. When the general attains his object, he very easily takes his part of the fatigues and evils to which he is about to expose his soldiers. Thus proceeded Monsieur de Choiseul. It cost him no more to leave a part of the population under the dominion of unjust, cruel laws, than to

send a regiment to the war in Germany, or a frigate to Pondicherry.

“So you do not think it a good idea?” resumed the king.

“I do not say that, sire. But I repeat that it is a serious matter. I should like to reflect. Your Majesty is not accustomed to make such sudden resolutions.”

“This was in truth a point which aroused the uneasiness of the minister. He trembled lest he might discover in the determination of the king the influence of some rival.

“You are surprised at that?” said Louis XV. “Perhaps it is not wonderful that you should be. But I know from experience that what I do not set about immediately, I never do at all. Besides, the edict will be discussed in the council.”

“But I should like your Majesty to inform me at least of its grounds.”

“Well, we will talk of it again.”

“Has your Majesty any other commands?”

“No.—But stay. When will you send me something?”

“Immediately, if your Majesty wishes.”

“No. Not this evening. I have something else to do.”

## XLVII.

### THE KING'S EDICT.

“What can he have to do?” thought the minister, as he took his departure. And he tried in vain to console himself by the reflection that he should hear the next day from Madame de Pompadour; he saw the king already throwing off his guardianship, or choosing other guardians.

The king thought very little of any such thing; he was only delighted, though without explaining to himself why, to feel



himself once more disposed to do something of his own accord. It was like the pleasure of the child, which finds itself able, without knowing how, to take a few steps all alone.

He reflected for a few moments, then as if proud of his new way of proceeding, and desirous to display it, he returned to the marquise.

She was alone. The duke de Richelieu, as she told the king, had gone to give some orders concerning the fête at Bellevue.

“Marquise,” he said, “I wish this matter finished. I am going to try my hand on this edict, which they pretend is so difficult to draw up. You are going to serve me again as secretary. Write :

“Although firmly resolved to live and die in the Catholic faith, and to endure no attack of any kind whatsoever, against its rights, honors, or privileges, yet as it has been represented to us that a part of our subjects have never yet been induced to embrace the truth, it has appeared to us that there is room for the modification of our previous edicts, put forth in the supposition that there existed but one religion in our kingdom.

“Our non-Catholic subjects will continue disqualified, in any case, under any form or denomination possible, to constitute a party in the State. They will remain subjected to all the general ordinances, including those relative to the external observance of the fêtes of the Church. No privilege can be granted them ; no right which they might not have in common with all our subjects, will result from the present edict.

“Our intentions thus declared, we have commanded, and now command, as follows :

“Art. I. The civil incapacitation to which our non-Catholic subjects have been liable until now, from the fact of their non-Catholicity, is and remains abolished.

“Art. II. Their declarations of births, marriages, or deaths, may be received by the officers of justice, without the intervention of the priests.

“Art. III. There shall be now, as always, but one public worship, that of the Catholic religion. But—”

The king considered, not without embarrassment, how he should continue this article, when some one was heard to scratch at the door. He opened it. A page presented himself.

“His reverence Father Desmarêts requests to know whether his Majesty will have the goodness to receive him for a few moments.”

“Father Desmarêts, marquise!” said the king, turning suddenly. “What does he want with me?”

“Ah! sire, he has scented the edict.”

“It is impossible.”

“For a Jesuit?”

“Must I see him?”

“Certainly. But let me go out.”

“Au revoir, then.”

“At supper.”

“Good.”

She disappeared by one door, and a few seconds afterwards Desmarêts entered by the other.

## XLVIII.

### THE KING'S CONFESSOR.

She was not mistaken. The confessor had scented the edict. But it was not this edict, projected scarcely an hour before, which had brought him to Versailles this evening.

Richelieu had met him, pacing gravely and gloomily to-

wards the apartment of the king. These two very dissimilar confidants of the faults of the same man, had always regarded each other with considerable jealousy. Living personifications of the two principles which strove together in the king's heart, it was generally more or less perceptible from their manner towards one another, which of the two had for the moment the upper hand in this domain so constantly tossed to and fro between heaven and hell. The same feelings were, however, displayed in a very different manner by these two men. Richelieu when he triumphed, only glanced down at Desmarêts, from the height of his importance; but Desmarêts triumphed with his eyes more humbly cast down, his voice sweeter, and his demeanor more lowly than ever. And at the moments when he himself knew not whether he were conqueror or conquered, his deportment was a singular mingling of resigned pride, and proud humility.

Richelieu amused himself, when he had an opportunity, by *drawing out* the old Jesuit, as he said. With the vanity which his successes with the ladies had encouraged, he actually fancied that he had very little trouble in causing him to betray his most private feelings, never perceiving that he began by betraying his own, and that Desmarêts had reached the inmost recesses of his thoughts, while he himself had scarcely touched those of Desmarêts.

“Ah! good evening, Father, good evening!” he cried.  
 “Are you going to the king?”

“If his Majesty condescend to receive me.”

“If his Majesty condescend? What! is not Father Desmarêts always welcome,—day and night?”

He thought himself very cunning and mischievous in reminding Desmarêts of the evening when he had come as far as the ante-chamber, only to be told by the valets that the king

was with his mistress. But it was this very recollection that the Jesuit was resolved to brave. He came now in the evening precisely to wipe out the old affront by having himself announced to the king, wherever he might be, and in whatever society he might chance to be engaged.

"Monsieur the duke is very good," he said.

"I will not detain you, Father. His Majesty is occupied, it is true."

"Ah!"

"But in a very holy manner. About the affairs of the Huguenots."

"Some edict, without doubt?"

"Yes indeed—an edict—the like of which we have not yet seen. Go, Father,—go."

And he himself went on, with a sneer and a laugh.

"On my honor," he said, "the edict is in great peril. This infernal man will never allow it to come to anything. And he will be so much the more enraged because he expects something quite different—persecutions,—dragoons. I should like to see his face when he learns the true state of the case."

And the good Father too, sincerity and laughed as he went on his way; and he better knew why. In the first place, he guessed well enough from the air of the marshal, what must be the spirit of the edict. And thanks to one of his trusty friends, Richelieu's secretary, he had for the last two days had in his pocket a copy of the petition which had just been read to the king. And in these tolerant thoughts which had entered the mind of Louis XV., he saw a means of gaining the accomplishment of his designs.

A great council had been held at Paris, consisting of the principal leaders of the order. They had agreed, as previously, at the archbishop's,—in acknowledging the imminence of their

danger, which made appalling progress. Some, particularly the Provincial, persisted in thinking that they ought to await the blow, and fall without a struggle, or conquer without warfare; the others, while acknowledging that a public resistance would but aggravate the evils of their situation, wished that it should at least be more clearly ascertained how they stood with the king, and what might be expected from him. It had been decided that his confessor should go to him, ask him the question frankly, and warn him that he must give a decision. Desmarêts, who was charged with this mission, was one of those who hoped the least from it. He had brought forward as an objection, the natural indecision of the king, and his incapability of carrying out his own most decided wishes; he had said that all might be lost, with scarcely a chance of gaining anything. But the thing once decided, he had obeyed, as a Jesuit alone knows how to obey. The will of his Order, represented by these assembled Fathers, had become his own. He marched to the combat without fear, as without hope, equally ready to dare much or little, to press forward or to draw back.

## XLIX.

### POLICY.

“Enter, Father,” said the king. “To what do I owe the pleasure—”

“You are surprised to see me, sire?”

“Why—”

“Yes, I asked myself as I came, what business I had here. The king is willing to be lost, I thought, let him be lost; but to drag with him to perdition, France,—the Church—”

“This language—Father—”

“Perchance God may punish me for not having spoken thus to you sooner, more clearly. I shall speak no more to you of your immorality. I have performed my duty on this point. I have said all to you that I had to say, but in vain. But lately, after resolutions and promises which I began to believe serious, you mocked—I will not say me; the king of France is perfectly at liberty to mock Father Desmarêts,—but God, of whom the Scripture says; ‘*Be not deceived, God is not mocked.*’ And accordingly the punishment has followed hard upon the offence.”

“The punishment?” said the king, astonished.

“Yes; and it is a double punishment, since you are not conscious of it. ‘Seeing, they may see,’ saith the Scripture, ‘and not perceive; and hearing, they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.’”

“And where,” said the king, “do you perceive this blindness of which you speak? I have sinned, but not without knowing it. Would to God it were so!”

“A king is not responsible only for that evil which he himself does; he is also responsible, perhaps even more so, for the evil which he allows to be done. Well, sire, have you reflected on the evil which you are allowing to be done? Do you prevent that which it is in your power to prevent? Do you punish that which it is in your power to punish? Do you lament over that which it is in your power neither to prevent nor punish?”

“If I were obliged to punish or deplore all the evil which is said or done in France, should I hold out long? No king ever was saved, if this be necessary.”

“In truth, no king was ever saved, if he refused to offer to



heaven, for his sins and those of his people, such atonements as it lay in his power to offer."

"Yes—that is it. We are to be the servants of the Church, your servants more especially,—and then we may do what we like."

"What you like? No, sire. You will find us near you whenever you sin. Before you sin, we will adjure you, in the name of God, to desist; afterwards, we will be there to offer you pardon, still in the name of God. We are able to offer it,—but pay its price we cannot, if we should give our blood. It is for you to pay this price; and with what? If the treasure has not been amassed beforehand, where shall it be procured at the last moment?"

This embraces the whole of Jesuitism. We are to pay for heaven, instead of receiving it by faith, accompanied by works, as a pure gift of the mercy of God.

"Yes," he repeated; "where shall it be procured? Ah! what a frightful death! The death of a sovereign forced to exclaim, in expiring, 'I have had twenty years, thirty years, half a century, in which to labor for the glory of God—and I have done nothing!'"

"Nothing?" cried the king.

"Nothing. For so long as there is something to be done, which can be done,—and which is yet neglected,—nothing is done. Would you look upon an enemy as vanquished, sufficiently vanquished, at least, for your glory and safety, whom you had not crushed more than you have crushed these execrable principles with which you permit your States to be overrun? Do you suppose your allies disposed to praise your sincerity,—those allies whom you allow to be threatened and insulted as we are threatened and insulted?"

"Allies!" murmured the king. "Since when?"

“Since when? Listen, sire. Since kings began to exist, there has been of necessity an alliance between those who command, and those who preach obedience. Besides this, there must stand above those who command in the name of the earth, those who command in the name of heaven,—and the first have never endeavored to rid themselves of the second with impunity. This principle of obedience,—without which all your power would be swept away like a vapor, by the first wind,—dwells in us, sire,—our society is at the present day its representative, its embodiment. Do you ask by what right? Woe be to that sovereign who in these days when all is tottering, should pause to seek our right! *We are*,—that is sufficient. We do not begin, in the midst of the tempest, to discuss the history, the form, the nature of the rock which offered us a shelter.”

“And if the rock also should totter?” said the king. “If there should be danger of our being swept away with it?”

“There is more danger of this without it. Yes, sire; whatever opinions and prejudices may exist in regard to us, we have become, from the force of circumstances alone, the representatives of the past, the depositories of all traditions. In our soil, as if in their native ground, all monarchies as well as the Church have struck deep root. Let this soil be torn up, and you will see whether the plough of the age will spare one more than the other. If you wish to precipitate yourself, in the train of the philosophers, into that new world which they speak of opening to the nations, then I have nothing to say to you. First lay your crown upon the threshold, if you would not have it presently rolled into the mire. But if you care to keep it upon your head, then no more of these subterfuges which lead to the perdition of your own soul and of your kingdom. You must be openly the friend and supporter of

those who cannot defend themselves without defending you, nor fall without your falling also. The time no longer exists when sensible people might assert that our society is not the Church, is not religion. Religion and the Church were in existence before us, but will they exist after us? That is the question. It is no longer the time to inquire how we gained, or allowed to be given us such a position as we now hold; but it is necessary to understand that such is our position, and that whoever at the present day is not for us, is necessarily against us, against religion, and against monarchy, and against all that monarchy, religion, and the Church have to uphold in this world. After that, consider what you had better do."

## L.

## A HARD STRUGGLE.—VICTORY.

Thus spoke the king's confessor. He was pertinacious, cutting, and inexorable, and moreover, he was right. As we have already said, then as now, Jesuitism was Catholicism incarnate. In spite of any precautions which might be taken, and of any illusions which might be courted, a rupture with Jesuitism, was a rupture with Catholicism; it was opening to the light of day all the abysses slumbering in the shadows of the past. And a vague instinct had already long ago whispered to the king all that he had just heard. Had he been bolder, more active, he would have been seen from his youth at the head of the champions of the past. He might have been broken perhaps, but would never have yielded.

"I am too old," he said.

"Too old to serve God?" asked the Jesuit. "You are not too old to sin against him."

“Father,” interrupted the king, “we are not now in the confessional. Do not oblige me to remind you that you are before the king, and in his palace. Well,—what is the matter? What are you doing?”

Desmarêts made no reply. He kneeled slowly with his head bowed and his hands joined, before a seat upon which he had placed a crucifix.

“Oh God!” he at length said, “it is true that I am in the palace of the king, and in his presence; but I am none the less in yours.\* Have I gone beyond my duty? Have I failed in respect to your anointed? If I have done so, pardon me, Lord. But above all, do not let him suffer for my fault; let not my imprudence be a pretext for him to harden his heart. Let him break the vase, if he will, but let him gather up its contents. Let him refuse to me, a sinner, the account of his deeds, if he but give it to you, to you, my God! You have given him for a long time a high place in this world; you have willed that he should be born to effect the salvation or perdition of a multitude of your children. You have committed to him not one, not five, not ten talents, as to the servant in the parable, but a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand. What has he done with them, my God, and what will he bring to you, when at the last day you ask him for the interest? You established him in your place to make your laws respected, and behold these laws are violated with impunity. You destined him to be a terror to the impious, and behold impiety appears boldly. Eldest son of the Church, he is upon the point of abandoning his mother, and of allowing her most devoted defenders to be driven from her side. Most Christian king, he is about to extend his hand to heresy—”

\* The Romanists employ the second person plural in addressing the Deity Tr.

“It is false,” cried the king.

But Desmarêts continued, without pausing, or changing his tone.

“——He is going to restore to error the hope of once more raising her altars——”

“It is false,” repeated the king.

But he was shaken. The tone, the calmness of the Jesuit moved him. He shuddered to hear himself spoken of, in his own presence, as the dead are spoken of.

“——He must have been very guilty then, oh God, that you should have forsaken him so far ! He must have appeared to you very unworthy of defending your cause, that you should have allowed him to lose all abhorrence for your enemies !——”

“Read,” cried the king, “read !”

“What is this ?” said Desmarêts, slowly turning his gaze from his ebony crucifix, and glancing at the paper extended to him by the king.

“It is my edict. Read it. See whether I forsake the faith which you accuse me of denying !”

Desmarêts arose. The hand which held the paper trembled. He had reached the last line before his look appeared to have quitted the first, which he seemed to be reading slowly, word for word.

“Good God !” he murmured, “good God !”

“Well ?”

“Words at the commencement ; deeds afterwards ; and the deeds wipe out the words.”

And again he fell upon his knees ; he again clasped his hands. His eyes wandered from the crucifix to the edict ; for the paper had dropped from his hand, and fallen upon the floor before the crucifix.

“My God!’ he cried. “Behold what is offered you! Instead of an active faith, vain protestations. Zeal professedly but treason in reality! He wishes to live and die, he says, in the bosom of your Church, and he abandons the attempt to bring those back who have abandoned it. He declares that he has faith in her, and he permits other instructions beside hers. He guarantees to her her prerogatives, and leaves in peace those who deny them. In public, her worship alone may be celebrated; but in private, heresy may freely carry on its own. As if, Lord, there were any difference in your eyes between an insult in the midst of a city, and an insult in the solitude of a desert; between an abomination committed in the day, and one committed at night! What will this pretended most Christian kingdom be, when all this happens, but a whited sepulchre, in which uncleanness gathers and increases? What will this king be—”

“Enough, Father,” said Louis XV. “Let it be as God will. I should hold my salvation too dearly bought, if it must be paid for by the continued sufferings of so many people. No! Do not speak of it again. Let them be converted; I am most willing; but I have permitted their persecution already too long. This edict shall be put into execution, Father.”

“No.”

“You said no,—I think?”

“I said no.”

“It shall be executed, I tell you.”

“No.”

“It is my will.”

“It is not the will of God.”

“It is mine. Unless a miracle take place—”

But he could not go on. Desmarêts stood with his arm raised, his eye flashing, and seemed but to have a word to



speak to call forth the miracle. The king recoiled, silent, startled. It might have been taken for an apparition, with a man terrified at having evoked it.

“A miracle!” said Desmarêts, slowly. “If one be needed, it will take place. Where? When? How? God only knows! But He will not permit the consummation of this apostasy. The eldest son of the Church shall not batter down her ramparts. Let him reflect and tremble. At the first stroke his hand would wither.”

And he let his hand drop, and, with his eyes cast down and his head bowed, as if beneath the weight of the maledictions which could be seen in his glance, he quitted the apartment.

The king had held out, but only with the most violent effort. He had in these few moments exhausted all the powers of his mind, so unused to exerting a will of its own. A complete prostration had followed the excitement of the struggle. A weak man is his own most redoubtable enemy and constant conqueror.

## LI.

### MADAME DU DEFFANT.

Let us return to Paris.

Towards the close of the same week, the Staff Officers of Philosophy were one evening assembled at the house of the marquise du Deffant.

They talked. Of what did they not talk! We have already described conversation at an era when newspapers were not in existence,—when all the news that now comes to us in a printed form was circulated by means of lively gossip,—and when liberty, banished from the press, took refuge in the saloons.

*A saloon*, in the sense assigned to the word by custom, sig

nified essentially a saloon presided over by a woman. A man, however distinguished he might be, and however frequented his house, might have *re-unions*, dinners, suppers, but he could not have a *saloon*.

Each saloon, besides its casual visitors, had its special *habitués*. "What woman of talent could do without her *menagerie*?" said Madame de Tencin, whose two principal *beasts*, to speak in her own style, were Fontenelle and Montesquieu!

Now, of all the saloons of the day, that of Madame du Defant was at this time the most in vogue. Madame Geoffrin, her rival, was equally clever, and had an equal number of friends; but—and it was an important point—they felt a little less at their ease with her. The bold spirits feared offending her, and the timid preferred going where it was less dangerous to be bold. They dined with pleasure with Madame Geoffrin; but they liked better to philosophize at Madame du Defant's.

And at both places, moreover, was always to be met a woman who began to dispute the pre-eminence with them,—Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse. Her equivocal birth, peculiar countenance, great wit, and tolerable amount of learning, had soon made her the fashion. Madame du Defant had received her into her house, after she lost her sight, in order to receive the guests, and still more in order to keep her company, for she could not endure being alone, even for an instant. To converse and to listen to conversation, was to her not merely a pleasure, but a necessity, the greatest, and, in some sort, the only one; her all and her existence; a mania, for that matter, which was that of the age. In truth, the eighteenth century was pretty well represented by this blind old woman philosophizing in her arm-chair.

In the midst of this vortex, of which it pleased her to be the

centre, Madame du Deffant was, according to her own statement, the woman most *ennuyée* in all France. She spoke of her *ennui* as Voltaire did of his ailments,—that is to say, unceasingly, and to everybody. She had commenced long before becoming blind, as Voltaire had long before becoming infirm. A singular compliment to the witty crowd who regaled her with their prattling! But they did not heed it. It was of little importance that she continued to complain of *ennui*, so long as they continued to amuse themselves so well in her saloon.

She had lately become sensible of that which she ought to have foreseen. Her dependant was becoming her protectress; her saloon was now but that of Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse. What was to be done? Dismiss her? But there were plenty of people ready to establish her in a house of her own, and this new saloon once opened, who would remain faithful to that of the poor blind woman? A final discovery had nearly brought on a rupture, which, however, only took place four years afterwards. Three of the most constant visitors of the baronne's soirées had been convicted of calling during the day, in order to converse with Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse. "It is a viper which I have cherished in my bosom," cried the mistress of the house at this news. She would have overlooked a love affair; she forgave her very willingly afterwards, when people began to give this name to her friendship for d'Alembert. But to converse out of her presence, to deprive her of a portion of her daily bread by carrying off the best of the news and prattle, could in her eyes be nothing less than the most abominable treason. It caused an endless series of misunderstandings, disputes and reconciliations, whose history must be read in the writings of the time, in order to form an idea of the importance which the household of two women could assume, in the vast inactivity of French society.

## LII.

## CONVERSATION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

It has struck nine. The saloon is almost full it would be still more crowded, if we were not in the beginning of August,—of *Augustus* as Monsieur de Voltaire would have us say. We will enter and endeavor to seize a few words from the midst of this heap of nothings presenting themselves in grave costume, and of serious questions debated in trifling tones.

“It is overwhelming!—Come Monsieur de la Caille,\* tell us something more about it. What a pity that Monsieur de Fontenelle should be dead!”

“Why, Madame?”

“Because he was the only person who could tell us poor women such things without terrifying us too much.”

“Why do you ask us about them, then?”

“Go on,—malicious!”

“Well! It is just as I had the honor of saying. I have calculated, within a few millions, the number of leagues which separate us from a certain star which I have been studying for a long time. I discovered—but I will not tell you the number. You could never remember it. Listen. Light travels, I told you—”

“About seventy leagues a second.”

“Good. How long a time then do you imagine was required for my star to become visible?”

“Six months.”

“Nonsense!”

\* The astronomer.

“Six years !”

“Pooh !”

“How long then ?”

“More than nine thousand years.”\*

“Ah ! Good heavens ! I shall dream of that !”

“Dream of it, Madame, indeed.”

“Nine thousand years ! And seventy leagues a second !”

“Nine thousand years. There may be stars created eighty centuries ago, which we have never yet seen.”

“Poor Moses !”

This was the conclusion which was drawn from all the discoveries of the age. They little imagined that science was one day to make peace with the author of Genesis, by finding in the succinct account of Moses, so sarcastically spoken of, all the most exact information which men have since been able to extort from the secrets of creation.

“Well ! So the beautiful Madame Baillet at length consents to allow poor d’Herbigny to love her ?”

“Yes ? And who told you so ?”

“He himself.”

“Ha ! Ha !”

“D’Herbigny is no boaster.”

“Oh ! no.”

“If he said so, it was because it is true.”

“It *was* true.”

“What ! Is it no longer so ?”

“It never has been.”

“I cannot comprehend.”

“It is thus. After more than a year of severity, she said to him one fine morning : ‘D’Herbigny, I want your portrait.’

\* Much larger calculations have since been made.

He was immediately in the clouds. He flies to an artist. He sits six hours that same day, six hours the next. In two days the portrait is finished and framed. He hastens, with his likeness, to throw himself at the feet of his charmer. 'Perfect!' she exclaims; and she rings. The porter makes his appearance, instead of the waitingmaid. 'Master Pierre,' she says, 'here is what I promised to give you. Put that in your lodge; and when the original comes—you will recognize him, will you not?' 'Oh! yes Madame' 'Tell him that I am not at home.'"

"Ah! good evening, my dear Abbé, good evening! So you have been remembered at last?"

"At last, as you say."

"I hope it is at least a fat living, since you were allowed to sigh after it so long?"

"*Fat*, no. My aspirations never rose so high. It is what one may call a *good* living."

"Six or seven thousand livres income?"

"About ten."

"Ah, ha!"

"I tell you the king of Prussia is a madman."

"A hero."

"A hypocrite."

"A wise man."

"A tyrant."

"A friend of mankind."

"A robber of kingdoms—"

"As Cæsar was."

"A scribbler of paper—"

"As Marcus Aurelius was."



“You are flattering the enemy of your country.”

“I am doing justice to a great man.”

“You rejoice at his successes.”

“Because they are triumphs of reason.”

“Of reason—with cannon balls!”

“You would prefer thunder bolts, like your good friends of the Vatican?”

“He alone has lighted more fires—”

“Decidedly, you can pardon none but those lighted at the stake.”

“You do not know?—”

“What?”

“That the abbé de Saint-Marcelin has a living at last.”

“Come, come!”

“I have just heard him say so himself. A *good* one he said.”

“Why he is a furious encyclopedist.”

“What does that prove?”

“It proves without doubt that he is a man of talent. But—”

“Is it not better that this living should profit a man of talent, than that it should fall into the hands of a fool?”

“Yes. I perceive a time is coming when the first qualification for advancement in the Church will be not to believe in God. Here, abbé!”

“What do you want?”

“Is there a God?”

“Certainly—since I am an abbé.”

“Monsieur, the tradition is positive and unalterable. It was from Montmatre to Saint-Denis, where the abbey now is, that the saint of that name carried his head in his hands.”

“No, Monsieur, no. Reason does not admit of our believing in so long a journey. A few steps,—that is well authenticated. Is it not so, Madame la marquise?”

“Why so, dear councillor? It is only the first step which is difficult.”

“What is going on at Versailles?”

“Nothing of importance.”

“And the marquise?”

“More in favor than ever.”

“But they say that the king appears singularly *ennuyé*.”

“She is only the more secure for that. It is just at such times that he leaves everything to her.”

“A great fête is spoken of, at Bellevue.”

“Yes, on Tuesday.”

“And the abbé de Narniers?”

“Remains preacher to the king.”

“And the other,—he is still to preach on Monday?”

“On Monday, at Saint-Sulpice.”

“Good.”

“This Monsieur de Buffon, with all his fine style, is some times so vulgar, that—”

“What indignation, Mademoiselle!”

“Did you see him just now, beside me? His legs crossed, his head thrown back, his eyes half closed. He fancied himself alone, apparently.”

“He was hunting out some phrase.”

“Yes—wait. I tried to begin a conversation. I spoke to him of his style,—for you know it is almost impossible to talk to him of anything else. ‘What a happy mingling,’ I said, ‘of profundity and simplicity!’ And Monsieur leaned him-

self back still farther. 'Oh! the devil!' he exclaimed, 'oh! the devil! When it is necessary to purify one's style, that is another part of speech!'<sup>\*</sup> *Another part of speech! Another—*"

"By the way, is it true that he never writes except in his sword and lace ruffles?"

"I fancy, between ourselves, that he has never been seen in those famous working ruffles; but—"

"But he is capable of wearing them."

"At all events, he might at least put them on when he has a compliment to acknowledge."

"Especially a compliment from Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse."

"You flatter me, Monsieur."

"I am but just. Do you know what he said the other day to a friend who was reading to him some of his verses?"

"No."

"'That is beautiful,' he cried, 'beautiful—as prose!'"

"Was he jesting?"

"Not at all, it is his system."

"We shall see him erect a statue to prose, some of these days."

"To *his own* prose."

"Monsieur, if the taxes should be reduced one half, and if the strictest economy should regulate the employment of them, still we would never pay them willingly, if the farming of the revenues be still insisted upon. So long as the people see the rich intermediaries between themselves and the public funds, evidently thriving upon the sweat of *their* brow, you

<sup>\*</sup> In the original, *C'est une autre paire de manches*; literally, *It is another pair of sleeves*. A vulgarism. Tr.

cannot rid them of the feeling that it is for *these* people they labor, not for the State. Knowing beforehand what the State will receive, each one is tempted to say,—every one in the lower classes does say,—that what he has paid will not augment the sum employed for public expenses by a sous. Bad reasoning, I admit, but it is incontestibly the reasoning of a multitude, and that is enough to make it advisable that the pretext should be done away with. The collecting of the taxes ought to remain in the hands of the government, and the collector should have a fixed salary; the poor man should feel when he pays, that he actually pays the government, and really contributes his little part to the necessities of the country.”

“Poor Poinset!\* Are you never going to cease laughing at him, vicomte?”

“Ha! ha! ha! I think I still see him reciting the Breton verses which I gave him as Russian!”

“He has a good deal of talent, however.”

“Yes, indeed! His little piece, the *Cercle*, is one of the prettiest which has been written for a long time. But he has not a grain of common sense. The merest child could take him in. He is one of those beings born to be mystified.”

“To be what?”

“*Mystified.*”

“That is not one of the academy’s words, so far as I know.”

“I should think not. We manufactured it, not three months ago, in honor of Poinset himself; and the academy does not enjoy the reputation of being very prompt.”

“Hush! There is Duclos listening to us.”

“Duclos has too much sense not to think as we do. Is it

\* The dramatic author.

not true, Duclos, that the academy is not very quick in its movements?"

"*Make haste slowly.*"

"Yes,—but by going too slowly, you may break your necks,—in public opinion."

"It is not my fault, however."

"No, to be sure not. It is well known that you push the car on. You swear, in the very Louvre, loud enough to shake the colonnade."

"I? Who says so?"

"Oh, your colleagues—everybody."

"Ah! the hounds!—ah! the—"

"Hush now! We are not at the Louvre. See him going to swear, in order to prove that he never swears! You would have been the very man for cardinal Dubois."

"Much obliged."

"Why not? At the least contradiction, he swore, as you know, at the top of his voice; he threw away a great deal of precious time at it. One of his secretaries asked him if he would not do well to have a *swearer general*?"

"The place would be almost as good as that of screen to the king."

"Screen to the king!"

"Yes. Another *mystification*,—begging pardon for the word,—which we made Poincinct swallow. We told him he had just been selected for this brilliant situation. Two days afterwards, when we had forgotten all about it, we heard that he was ill; and from what,—do you imagine? From having broiled his legs by standing before an infernally hot fire, in order, as he said, to accustom himself to his new duty."

"I tremble, Madame, lest you should think me presuming."

“Say on.”

“The charming letter which you said you had received from Monsieur de Voltaire—”

“Well?”

“Might one dare to beg for a sight of it?”

“If you will promise me to show it to no one.”

“To no one,—except those who charged me with the petition.”

“Ah! It is a deputation, then, which I receive?”

“A deputation, as you say. Here are Chamfort and Saint Lambert, who have been charged to support my request. This letter—”

“See, here it is. But be prudent. Let none hear it, you understand, save friends. There are certain things—”

“Do not be uneasy, Madame. Here, Messieurs. Here—in the small saloon—”

“Read, Saint Lambert.”

“‘FERNEY, July 25, 1760.

“‘The eloquent Cicero, Madame, without whom no Frenchman can think, always commenced his letters with these words: “If you are well, I am rejoiced at it; as for myself, I am well.”

“‘I am so unfortunate as to be quite the opposite of Cicero. If you are ill, I am grieved at it; as for myself, I am ill. Happily, I have made myself a nest in which I can live or die according to my own fancy. I have purchased estates around my hermitage; I have enlarged my sepulchre. If I dared, I should fancy myself wise, I am so happy. I have really lived only since the day when I selected this retreat. Any other sort of life would now be insupportable to me. Paris is essential to you; to me it would be death.

“‘Would to heaven, Madame, that you could live as I do,



and that your charming society might augment my happiness. I congratulate you and Monsieur the president Hénault upon being frequently together, and being able mutually to console one another for the absurdities of this world.

““ You wish me to send you the works with which I employ myself when I neither plough nor sow. In fact, I scarcely know how I shall dare do so, I have become so bold with age. I can no longer write what I think ; and I think so freely, that it is scarcely probable I can send my ideas by post. I shall have the honor, however, to send you one or two new cantos of *The Maid of Orleans*, which no one has seen as yet. If you want a picture of this ugly world, you may find one shortly in my *Universal History* of the follies of the human race. I have also set to work to render an account to myself, in alphabetical order, of all that I am to think about this world and the next,—for my own use, and perhaps, after my death, for the use of good people. I think I shall call it *Philosophical Dictionary*.

““ The semi-freedom with which people in France are beginning to write, is still nothing but a disgraceful chain. Accordingly, you must accustom yourself to a dearth of talents of every kind,—to smartness grown common, and genius rare ;—to a perfect deluge of books on war, only to be beaten afterwards,—on finance, only to lack money as much as ever,—on population, only to be still in want of husbandmen and recruits,—in short, on all the arts, only to succeed in none.

““ We have, in fact, no native inventions. In the arts, we are silly savages compared with the Italians. In philosophy, we have learned a little that was good from the English, scarcely thirty years since.

““ The Spaniards have conquerèd a new world ; the Portuguese have discovered the way to the Indies ; the Arabs and Turks have founded powerful empires ; my friend the czar

Peter has formed an empire of two thousand leagues extent in twenty years; and the Scythians of my empress Elizabeth have beaten my good Prussian king,—while our armies are routed by the peasants of Wolfenbüttel.

“We have been so clever as to establish ourselves in the snows of Canada, among bears and beavers; while the English have peopled four hundred leagues of the most beautiful country in the world with their flourishing colonies,—and we suffer ourselves even to be chased out of Canada.

“We build also, from time to time, a few vessels for the English; but we build them badly. When they condescend to capture them, they complain that we give them miserable sailers.

“Upon my honor, our age is a miserable age!

“You ask me what you will find the most interesting to read. Read the gazettes, Madame: everything in them is marvellous as a romance. One reads of vessels loaded with Jesuits; and one never wearies of wondering why they are driven out of only one kingdom as yet. One reads of the French being beaten in the four quarters of the globe,—of our ministers bundled out of office one after the other,—of our flat boats,—and of our descents—down the river of La Vilaine. One reads—

“But you say you want to read something else besides gazettes. Well, I will mention all that may possibly amuse you. There, for instance, is *Infidelity opposed by—common sense*, by dear brother Menon, the confessor of king Stanislas; or the *Reconciliation of the understanding with religion*,—the *Norman reconciliation*, as some call it,—by bishop Pompignan, brother of the academician Pompignan, or the— But you live in the midst of these fine things, and it is rather for you to send them to me.

“ ‘And yet there is one pleasure greatly to be preferred to all this ; it is to watch the wide-spreading meadows becoming green, and the great harvests ripening slowly.

“ ‘I beg your pardon, Madame, for speaking to you of a pleasure which is enjoyed by one’s eyes alone. You no longer know any enjoyment save that of the intellect.

“ ‘Apropos, have you a good digestion? I have become sensible, after much reflection upon this best of worlds, and upon the small number of the elect, that one is never truly unhappy so long as one has a good digestion. After all, the only thing is to end one’s career comfortably. All the rest is *vanity of vanities*, as somebody says.

“ ‘Accept my tender respects.

V.’”

“ Well, Monsieur de la Condamine, and our convulsionnaires?”

“ Most extraordinary.”

“ You are going to tell us about them, are you not?”

“ If you choose.—But hush! There is Monsieur de Faillet, who was there—”

“ As a spectator?”

“ As a believer, no offence to you. Let us go a little further off.—Good. Well, upon this occasion, sister Françoise was to be crucified.”

“ To be—”

“ Crucified,—positively,—I swear to you. A real cross,—good, strong nails. Ah, my hands and feet hurt me, whenever I think of what I saw. They pretend that they do not suffer, and that, according to them, is the great miracle.”

“ Who knows?”

“ Who knows?—I should like to see you try it! To be sure it is not impossible that the pain yields a little to faith,

but sister Françoise suffered horribly, I promise you, although she might not choose to proclaim it. Although she did not cry out, she made grimaces enough to prove it."

"And the executioner, who—"

"The executioner,—no, the *assistant*, (*secouriste*), as they call him, in their cant language, for all the knick-knacks, nails, swords, kicks, and so on, they call *assistance*, (*secours*)—the assistant was Father Cottu, of the Oratoire, aided by Father Guidi, a tall, thin man, with goggles, who exhausted himself in assuring the patient that the nails did not incommode her."

"And what did the patient say?"

"She deafened us all with declamations in a language which I did not understand, upon the evils of the Church, they informed me, and on the future reign of the saints."

"And the saints rubbed their hands, in the mean time?"

"No; they rubbed hers, with a certain water of Saint Pâris, their patron, which has the virtue, they say, of causing all pain to disappear."

"And how long did all this last?"

"More than three hours."

"And who was there besides Monsieur de Faillet?"

"Monsieur de Merinville, his parliamentary colleague, Monsieur de Janson, an officer in the mousquetaires, Monsieur de la Tour-du-pin, Monsieur de Lafont-Saint-Yenne, who went down upon his knees, from time to time, bathed in tears—a few others, besides."\*

"And I tell you that Monsieur de Voltaire jests when he pretends to believe in the prodigious antiquity of the Chinese

\* Monsieur de la Condamine afterwards wrote an account of all that he had witnessed in these strange assemblies.

and the Hindoos. No man ever lied as he does. And his admiration for Confucius, of whom scarcely anything is known! And his adoration of Julian the Apostate, of whom only too much is known! And his mania for asserting that the early Christians were scarcely persecuted at all! Do you imagine that he believes all this ridiculous or abominable stuff that he puts forth in his pamphlets?"

"Not all of it, I know; but perhaps more of it than one would think. By dint of repeating it, he impresses it upon his mind, and then—"

"I understand. By dint of lying, he becomes at last sincere. Really a sublime method of employing speech and reason!"

"Just as you please; but the antiquity of the Hindoos is nevertheless—"

"Again!—Well, let us ask Monsieur de Gebelin.—Ah! he was here just now. What has become of him?"

"He is yonder,—see, in that corner."

"But who is it that he is talking with?"

"It is a face I do not know."

### LIII.

#### RABAUT AND GEBELIN.

We have long known this face, which was new to the defender of Monsieur de Voltaire and his ancient Hindoos. Gebelin's companion was Rabaut.

He had desired more closely to observe this brilliant society, whose scintillations dazzled all Europe, whose least whispers imposed silence upon the past, and seemed to open the future. Gebelin, who was received everywhere, had taken

him wherever he could see without being too much seen, hear without being obliged to talk, and judge without speaking.

They had retired into a corner, from whence they passed in review all that the current of the saloon was causing to come before their eyes.

“That man,” said Gebelin, “whom you heard deciding upon the antiquity of the Hindoos, is one of those learned sheep who would deny the sun at noon, if Monsieur de Voltaire thought fit to deny it. His adversary is an old Jansenist.”

“I had fancied,” said Rabaut, “that I should see none but infidels here.”

“I said Jansenist, take notice; I did not say believer. The Jansenism of the present day is often nothing more than a decent sort of infidelity. Many are Jansenists, just as others are infidels, from fashion, from opposition; many, while they are avowed infidels, belong nominally to the different religious parties. ‘You are persecuted,’ said Boindin to one of his friends, ‘because you are a Jansenist atheist; but I am left in quietness, because I am a Molinist atheist.’

“In that group, yonder, you may recognize several of our friends of the other day, d’Holbach, Damilaville, d’Alembert, Grimm.”

“And Helvétius?”

“He has received official orders not to show himself for several days.”

“And Diderot?”

“He speaks his mind too plainly. Madame du Deffant hinted that she could dispense with his company. He comes every now and then, in order not to seem banished; and indeed he is not banished; but he himself prefers having more elbow-room than he generally has here. The marquise is willing enough to be an infidel, but not to break with religion.



Indeed, she has once or twice attempted to turn devotee; for you know that there is no medium, among the Catholics of the higher classes, between *high devotion*, as they call it, and infidelity. 'I am ennuyée half to death, she said to her associates. 'Shall I not try a little of everything?' They laughed; and at last she laughed also. 'I will wait until I am a little older,' she said. So she is waiting."

"And how old is she, then?"

"Sixty-two or sixty-three."

"Who is that old gentleman, who pays her such assiduous attention?"

"The comte de Pont-de-Veyle, her lover."

"Ah!"

"At least he has held that situation for a long time. Nothing can be more innocent, for that matter, than their relations. In a certain set, a lover is looked upon as a necessary piece of furniture. A slight varnish of scandal is absolutely necessary, although there may not be the slightest inclination for it. It is in order to set off the reputation, one might fancy, just as patches set off the complexion. 'Do you not wonder,' said Pont-de-Veyle to her lately, 'how we have contrived to live thirty years without a single falling out?' 'My dear,' she said, 'it is because we have never loved each other.' And yet it was she who reproached Monsieur de Fontenelle with never having loved any one. 'It is not a heart that you have here,' she said, touching his breast with her finger; 'it is a second brain!' I thought for a long time that the same thing might be said of her; but it appears that an Englishman, lord Walpole—"

"The same who was lately in Paris?"

"Yes."

“She knew him, then, in her youth?”

“Not at all; she has fallen distractedly in love with him in her sixtieth year. He laughed at her; he went so far as to say to her, in a letter since become public, that he cared little at forty, to be the lover of a woman of sixty. She persists; it is asserted that she writes to him in the tenderest style. But the most curious part of the matter is, that the public do not laugh. Madame du Defiant is the fashion; Madame du Defiant is the patroness of the formers of public opinion; that is enough; she has the right to be an old fool, without any one venturing to laugh or to stare. Then, mark well, it is for an Englishman that she sighs; and the surest way, in these days, to be popular in France, is not to be French. All the men whom you see here, with the exception of two or three, are in love with the king of Prussia. How, then, could they blame the mistress of the house for being in love with a noble lord, a man of talent, and tolerably well versed in the ideas of the day? This last point, as you may well think, is the indispensable one. Out of infidelity, there is no salvation. The reason why they so cry up the king of Prussia, is not that he is an able writer,—for in regard to this they laugh slyly, indeed sometimes even loudly;—nor because of his liberal political ideas, from which it is well known that his subjects derive no benefit;—absolutely, the only reason is his infidelity. His advancement, they assert, is the progress of reason. What do they mean by that? Is it for infidelity that he fights? Does he impose upon his vanquished enemies the obligation to be infidels? No. But he is one himself; that is enough. All his enterprises must be proper; the French will be enchanted with all the harm which he may do them; and the only verses which Monsieur d’Alembert ever made in his life

were in his praise.\* It is the most odious piece of folly ever shown by any people.

“Another of the passions for the English, is that of *Made-moiselle de l’Espinasse*. It is true that Sterne, her hero, is a grave churchman, to whom I do not suppose she says tender things; but she is infatuated with his book, and it will not be her fault if all our writers do not set to work to make *Sentimental journies*.

“The count de Buffon, whom I pointed out to you just now, beside her, is the type of the aristocratic writer. Few reputations are less disputed than his. It is asserted that Rousseau, who always runs into extremes, one day kissed the threshold of his cabinet. He has a right to be proud of his works; but his pride is frequently undignified; it somewhat resembles that of a parvenu who thinks too much of his title, or of a man lately become rich, and continually dreaming of his money. The moment he condescends, he easily becomes low,—almost gross. He is accused of lacking a due appreciation of the talents of his fellow authors. Two of them, Daubenton and Guéneau, are now talking to him. See how haughtily he holds his head, and how he plants himself between them, with his gold-buckled shoes.

“You heard Monsieur de La Caille. He is one of the first astronomers of the age; always calculating, always making discoveries, philosophizing but little, and working all the better for it. There is his colleague, Clairault, a little too much inclined to quit the heavens for earthly discussions; which is, I

\* “Father and monarch,—valiant and wise,  
He knows how to conquer, to reign and advise.  
A hero he is, e’en when fallen he lies;  
But risen, he puts forth his genius and ire,  
And sees all Europe arise,  
To combat, but more to admire.”

suspect, the fault of his disciple, Bailly, also,—a great admirer of the ancient republics. Clairault is none the less a very great mathematician. Last year's comet, whose appearance he had predicted, contributed equally to make him renowned among the learned, and fashionable among the ladies. He is now talking to— But why does that lady scream? Ah! I understand. He must have opened his snuff-box—”

“Who?”

“M. de Lalande, whom I was about to point out to you. Spiders are his passion—”

“He tames them?”

“Not at all; he eats them. That box, which he calls his snuff-box, is full of them. He has just taken one out. See,—he pulls off the claws, and sucks them. He says nothing can be more juicy. He is a good-hearted man, but an incurable atheist.

“The group who were talking of taxes, is the party of political economists. There is young Necker, of whom I spoke to you the other day. There, too, is his friend Turgot, a wise thinker, but a great talker,—not so great, however, as the crabbed Marquis de Mirabeau, who would doubtless be here, if he were not in the Bastille, whither he was sent on account of his *Theory of Taxation*. There is Morellet, who, as you know, has just been liberated. He excels in setting forth clearly, the somewhat confused ideas of his companions in political economy. It is quite a new science. Its founders, to begin with Quesnay, are still very far from having fixed its foundations, or even from having determined its field. These gentlemen sometimes do me the honor to request some information from me in regard to the former manner of carrying on these affairs; they always come to the conclusion, sometimes with a little pomposity, but often with too much reason, that

there has never been so badly governed a country in the world.

“As for literary men, authors, properly speaking, all whom I have not yet mentioned to you, belong to their ranks, or wish to belong to them. There is young La Harpe, to whom two prizes in rhetoric have opened a literary career, and who is working at a tragedy, *Warwick*, which his friends commend highly. There is young Chamfort, renowned for his successes at college,—already a bold talker, much sought after, but little liked. Two others, less sought after, but much better liked, are now speaking to him. One is Corlardeau, still quite crushed by the failure of his *Caliste*; the other is Saurin, who has met with more than one failure, but who will soon retrieve these, it is said, by his *Spartacus*. There, at the corner of the mantel, stands Barthe, an original thinker, but a weak poet, to say nothing more; and there is Suard, one of those men who attain a certain reputation, without any one knowing well why or how; and there Saint Lambert, whom Madame du Deffant called ‘cold, insipid, and false,’ but who is in such high favor at Ferney, that he is well received everywhere. He is rich, moreover, and has taken to enacting the Mécenas, as you may perceive from his air. The man to whom he is speaking at this moment, is Chabanon, formerly a bigot, now an encyclopedist.

“The two who are talking at the other corner, are also two of our patrons of literature, the marquis, de Chastellux, and the duke de Nivernais; the marquis, amiable and unpretending, the duke, aspiring to authorship, writing a little upon all subjects, never beyond mediocrity, but always praised. He was a moment ago with president Hénault, talking of the history of France, now he is talking to Vanloo, the king’s painter, talking, doubtless, of art; and what he says to them this even-



ing, he will write to-morrow, to be published the next day. The gentleman just coming up is the count d'Argental, the particular friend and confidant of Monsieur de Voltaire, the only man whom he is known to consult in regard to his works. That will explain to you sufficiently, I imagine, why he is so surrounded with respect and admiration. The confidant, the adviser, the oracle! He has no equal in Europe, some one remarked, save the pope's confessor.

“Then as for the abbés, you see there is no lack of them, all excelling in putting their livery to shame, some by their infidelity, some by their immorality, many by both at once. You have there the abbé de Voisenon, the great opera maker; there is the abbé Raynal, the Diderot of abbés. There are several more, the abbé de Saint-Non, the abbé d'Ardigny, and the abbé de Saint-Marcelin, so proud of his living, and so astonished that he was obliged to wait for it so long, as if the abbé de Bernis, who came here so often, had not just been made cardinal, and as if it were necessary after all, that an abbé should believe in God! The abbé d'Argenteuil, who is a believer, took it into his head to convert Diderot. He was laughed at, and we have never seen him here since.

“Among the Jansenists, in spite of what I said to you about them, we have some who exert themselves vigorously to become true believers. Did you hear those two gentlemen, who so honestly discussed the legend of Saint-Denis? Well, one of them is a man of no intellect; but the other is Monsieur de la Chalotais the attorney-general, and enemy of the Jesuits. Thus act and think the greater part of the prominent men among them. They resist the instructions of the Church, and put entire faith in the most miserable superstitions. The deacon Pâris, as you heard, has still more than one disciple. The police is perpetually on the look-out for these meetings



where kicks and blows, say the adepts, do no injury, so greatly does God delight in glorifying his saints. And when one of them is discovered, some man is sure to be found there whose position and intelligence would have precluded all supposition that he could participate in these follies.

“Yet it is among the Jansenists that we are to seek the few true Christians,—with two or three exceptions,—which the Church of Rome still numbers in France. In vain she casts them off; they do more for her than any others.”

“In the opinion of the ignorant,” said Rabaut. “But is their Catholicity really such? The Jesuits whom they proscribe are the only true consistent Catholics. It ought to be easy to make them confess this.”

“Easy, you say?” resumed Gebelin. “I have tried it a hundred times; a hundred times have I convinced myself that we must not depend upon reason, even when we have to deal with the most reasonable of mankind. One might imagine that in all false and logically untenable positions, there must be a certain charm which induces people to persist in defending them. The mind sets to work to find explanations, distinctions, pretexts. It feels the pleasure of difficulties conquered, the pride of travelling in a path different from the common highways, it feels—how do I know what? People do not explain to themselves clearly what they feel, but they persist, and their opponent has his trouble for his pains. Add to that, in these questions the immense stride which would have to be made, if they concluded to carry out their consistency. The Gallican who should confess himself no Catholic, would have nothing more to do than to declare himself a Protestant. He might retain some of the Romish doctrines; but he would retain them as we do ours, claiming the right to reject them, as soon as he considers them as contrary to Scrip-

ture and to his own conscience. In fact there are few Catholics who do not use this right. It is already a proof that it has been employed, and largely, too, when a man calls himself a Gallican, or a Jansenist; but to acknowledge and proclaim it, is quite another thing. This terrifies him, he recoils, he looks back, he slumbers once more. Would you like me to make another trial?"

"On Monsieur de la Chalotais?"

"No; on Monsieur de Faillet, whom I see yonder, one of the most pious and sincere—in short, the best Catholic among all the frequenters of the house. You shall see with what an air of pity he presses my hand, and how his look seems to say, 'Poor creatures! lost, damned!'"

"Very charitable, certainly; but how, then, can he remain under the same roof with some of these other gentlemen? Does he believe that we are more lost or damned than a d'Alembert or a d'Holbach?"

"In reality, no; but as soon as these things are brought up, he cannot help thinking a great deal more of us than of them. They are lost sheep, about which no one any longer troubles himself; but we are only straying sheep. Monsieur de Faillet and his companions treat us on a small scale, just as the government on a large. If we are Christians otherwise than the king wills, we must go to the galleys; we must cease to be Christians at all, if we would be left in peace. To be sure, this is but one of the forms of the universal want of order which prevails. The narrower the chasm separating two parties, the greater is the antipathy, the more violent the warfare. 'But he is a Jansenist!' said Louis XV. one day. 'He, sire! It is not even certain that he believes in God.' 'So much the better!' said the king; and he grants to the infidel the favor which he would have refused to the Jansenist. And thus proceed

these same Jansenists as soon as *we* come under discussion. We are the horror of the more violent of them; and the charitable ones pity us. Stay,—see how our friend has just pressed Grimm's hand. They almost embraced each other. They whisper together. But he is coming this way."

## LIV.

## HUGUENOT AND JANSENIST.

"Ah! good evening, Monsieur de Faillet!" said Gebelin, as if he had just perceived him.

"Good evening, my dear sir! good evening!"

Rabaut could not help smiling. The tone, the grasp of the hand, the look, everything, in short, was just what Gebelin had predicted.

"What was Monsieur Grimm saying to you just now?" asked Gebelin. "He had a most triumphant air."

"As he always has, the wretch, when he thinks he can enrage me."

"Some impiety, doubtless?"

"A jest. He is really very witty."

"How well you seem to bear it!"

"What can I do?"

"You would not endure a grave Protestant discussion so quietly."

"Monsieur!"

"Is it perhaps because you are more afraid of the latter?"

"Afraid!"

"Or because you concern yourself less about God than about the mass?"

“I concern myself both about God and about the mass, Monsieur.”

“Very good.”

“And I shall prove it, I hope, if I publish my works. It will be seen whether—”

“Oh! pen in hand, it is another matter. A man has time to arrange his attacks and defences; to repress expressions which may be too strong, and sharpen those which are not strong enough. I was alluding to your ordinary, instinctive ideas.”

“God alone is judge of those.”

“God alone!—and the Church?”

“The Church cannot have the right to judge of that about which she knows nothing.”

“That is a speech which would sound very badly, I fancy, to certain ears, in certain countries. Your Church has never admitted that she is not to be the judge of the most secret feelings. This opinion alone puts you in opposition to her.”

“At all events, you are not the person to reproach me for it.”

“Not I; I only pray that God will cause you to make rapid progress in this doctrine. But you have already gone far enough for us to be surprised, when you seem to fancy yourself so widely removed from us.”

“That, in fact, is the point,” added Rabaut. “Some details have just been given me, Monsieur, in regard to the religious party to which you belong; and I could not, in conscience, help asking myself why you do not belong to ours. For why is it that we are not Catholics? Our reasons may be easily reduced to three. That, in the first place, which I may term hierarchical; we do not believe in the authority of the pope. Secondly, that, which I shall term doctrinal; we will have no rule of faith but Scripture. And finally, that which may be

called moral ; namely, we leave to each one the responsibility of his own belief, as well as his own actions. These principles are yours."

"Ours!" cried Monsieur de Faillet.

"Yours. Be kind enough to listen to me."

"Suppose we take our seats?" said Gebelin.

They went on into a small apartment, and sat down.

"To resume our subject," said the minister. "My three points are, in fact, closely connected. It would be useless to develop them separately.

"With us, as I said, every man is responsible for his belief. Among you, what do I see? From Pascal to Quesnel, from Arnauld to your leaders of the present day, an endless tissue of discussions and struggles. Would this, I ask, be the spectacle presented by men really convinced that the Church alone is to be depended upon ; that what she gives must be accepted, what she condemns be rejected, what she approves be approved, and what she condemns be condemned? Either you resist,—and this I do not admit,—for the mere pleasure of resisting, or you feel yourselves, in the presence of God, responsible for your belief.

"Still further. Not only do you not appear to believe that the responsibility of the Church sufficiently shelters your own, but, the case failing, you assume the position of a formal resistance. It is not for me now to examine the points upon which you have been condemned ; I confine myself to remarking, that there are and have been numerous decisions to which you have never entirely submitted yourselves. When the archbishop of Paris, your legitimate pastor, refuses you the sacraments,—when the pope supports the archbishop,—when the whole body of bishops, with one or two exceptions, is unanimous against you,—it is impossible for me to comprehend in

what sense you are still the children of the Church which pretends to speak in the name of God, and which—this you yourselves teach, when it is necessary to oppose its word to us—cannot err.”

“We do not deny its authority,” said Monsieur de Faillet; “we confine ourselves to distinguishing between the cases in which the exercise of this authority is natural and legitimate, and those in which it would be an usurpation.”

“There it is!—But Monsieur, tell me, for Heaven’s sake, what difference do you see between us, who deny it *in toto*, and yourselves, who deny it when it seems good to you?”

“What! would it be the same thing, do you think, to deny the king’s authority, and to resist it, in a case of flagrant oppression?”

“Your comparison is not and cannot be just. The greatest defenders of royal authority, have never claimed for it the privilege of infallibility. They grant you,—and how could they do otherwise,—that a king may make bad laws, give bad orders, and have absurd ideas. Could you say the same of the pope, without giving him up entirely?”

“The pope is not the Church.”

“Just as you like; but pray what is the Church without him? As soon as his voice is not infallibly that of the Church, where must you go? Where is the Church? When, how, through whom does she speak? Every one, then, may make her speak; each one may assert with equal authority, what she ought to be understood to teach, or not to teach. We also admit the authority of the Church in this manner, with this difference, that instead of supporting ourselves upon what she teaches at the present time, we rest upon what she taught in the first or second century. True, we do not acknowledge that any one has the right or power to tell us infallibly what



she then taught; but you, if you do not acknowledge the pope to be the person to tell you infallibly what she teaches now, whom *can* you acknowledge? There we see you, like ourselves, practising the right of individual judgment, we see you laboring, each one for himself, and on his own responsibility, to form for himself, with the triple aid of the Scriptures, conscience, and history, the religion which he is to profess. I repeat it, unless you acknowledge a pope,—an infallible pope,—you may say as much as you will, that you do not resemble us; you have in reality the same principles as ourselves.”

“What matters it, provided that we, after all, are in the right, while you remain in the wrong?”

“What matters it? Why Monsieur, that is almost an abjuration. You could not possibly have confirmed more clearly all that I just said. What matters it? you ask. What matters it how the truth be reached, if it be but reached? Why the Church in such a system is no longer anything more than an assistance to be resorted to, when one feels the need of it, and consequently to be laid aside, as soon as one feels it possible to do without her. She is an authority to be consulted; not *the authority*, in the absolute, complete, divine sense which all Catholic authors have given to this word. Once more, the consideration of results has nothing to do here. As soon as you assume to yourself the right not to submit in everything, but to examine, to determine yourself whether or not you will submit, you have deserted the Catholic principle. It is all one whether you reject the bull *Unigenitus*, or the Council of Trent.”

“Come! come! It is easy to see that you are ignorant how we look upon these matters.”

“Yes, thank God, I am ignorant of the sophisms in which you are forced to take refuge, in order still to appear Catholic,

while retaining certain rights of conscience and reason. To appear Catholic! Do you at least succeed in this? If you do not deceive God, do you at least deceive men? Yes; those who choose to be deceived; those whose interest it is to be so; those who would fear the sensation caused by an honest, distinct explanation. But do you deceive those, who like us, have no interest in being cautious; those, who like the Jesuits, wish that you should be Catholics in deed, and not in word only? Do you expect to deceive them? When they summon you to submit,—armed with the bull *Unigenitus*,—and you do not submit, what room is there for hesitation? It must be *yes*, or *no*. A bull, you say, is not a decree of the council. But, so far I know, you have no permanent council.”

“I beg your pardon,” said Monsieur de Faillet; “it is not assembled, but it exists. When the body of bishops have unanimously admitted a decree of the sovereign pontiff, then this decree has the force of a law.”

“Very good; you could not better have anticipated just what I was about to say. A bull, according to you, has the force of a law, only after having been received by the whole body of bishops; and the bull *Unigenitus*, you were undoubtedly about to add, has not been so received. Some bishops have objected, and still object. Yes, but how many? Does it depend then upon a few, upon three or four, upon one, to prevent a decree of the pope, received by all the others, from being obligatory to the Church? In that case, what you say of the bulls might also be said of almost all the decrees of the councils. Even at Trent, where they had so many reasons for endeavoring to appear united, there was scarcely one made which was not opposed by some of the bishops, frequently by a number of them, a very great number, a quarter, a third of the voters. Will you reject those? I have no ob-

jections ; but in that case, what is it to be a Catholic ? What right have you to keep that name ?

“ All this, you see, leads us back to the point where I commenced. The true and only Catholics are the Jesuits. One day when the papal Nuncio visited Chancellor d’Aguesseau, at Fresnes, he said : ‘ So it is here that weapons are forged against Rome ? ’ ‘ No,’ replied the Chancellor, ‘ not weapons, only shields.’ And the whole dispute is there. What the Jansenists call shields, the Ultramontanists call weapons ; and the Ultramontanists are right. At the Council of Trent, when Lainez, the general of the Jesuits, undertook to set forth his theory of the infallibility of the pope, he forced every one to admit that he and his brethren alone, were, if not in the right, at least the only honest and complete applicants of the principle of authority. He demonstrated, that in refusing infallibility to the pope, it was also refused to the Church ; that if the liberty of disobedience or even of examination be taken in regard to one point, there is no reason why it may not be done in regard to all others ; that there is, in short, between a Protestant and a Jesuit, only a factitious, slippery, lying medium. Ah ! if all the Jesuits had the frankness of Lainez ! If they, like him, refused the name of Catholics to all those who were really not such ! What amazement, what a disbanding there would be in your Church ! But no, they are as accommodating to those who keep their rebellion within their hearts, as they are bitter against those who raise the standard of rebellion. Who ever says that he is a Catholic, is allowed by them to imagine that he is one.”

“ Why not ? ” interrupted Monsieur de Faillet. “ What is the use of disquieting consciences actuated by good intentions ? I did not expect to find myself the apologist of the Jesuits, and yet—”

“Listen. One of two things is true; either it is impossible to be saved without being a Catholic, or it is not. If it is not, let those be left in peace who have the courage and frankness to confess that they are not Catholics. If it is, then it is cruel to leave in their error those who imagine that they are, while they are only half Catholics, or not Catholics at all, which is, in fact, the same thing.”

“That is singularly absolute.”

“Is it my fault? All questions in your Church necessarily assume this character. The best arm to employ against you,—I had almost said the best punishment to inflict upon you,—is to pin you down to your own principles, and forbid you to deviate from them. Transgress against them, and you are ours; hold to them, and you find yourselves side by side with these men whom you profess to combat and abhor.

“Permit me to say, then, that it is no small encouragement to us, in our struggle against Catholicism, to see it execrated, under the name of Jesuitism, by so great a number of its children. On this point we agree perfectly with the Jesuits. We esteem them right, perfectly right, in declaring themselves to be the only true Catholics,—the only ones truly consistent in the application of Catholic principles,—the only inheritors, in virtue of their fidelity, of the divine promises which you assert to have been made to your Church. They can prove that in condemning them, you condemn her; that in striking them, you strike her. Condemn, strike. We shall not hinder you. But remember that in striking them, you strike yourselves at the same time.”

## LV.

## EXPECTATION.

Monsieur de Faillet affected not to listen. He had of course felt, though vaguely, during his struggles with the Ultra-montanists, all that Rabaut had just said. Like all the Catholic enemies of the Jesuits, he had been obliged to shut his eyes, in order not to see where, in reality, fell the greater portion of the blows directed against them. Like all Catholics who were friends of an enlightened faith, of a wise freedom, and of a serious and elevated piety, it was only by shutting his eyes that he had been able, without falsehood, to continue to call himself a Catholic.

But it is not easy unhesitatingly to give up an illusion without which it would no longer be possible to avoid laying down one's weapons. The heart is marvellously skilful in preventing the head from comprehending the real state of the question. It has been said that the head is frequently the dupe of the heart. More frequently, we may add, it is, if not its dupe, its slave.

The discussion could have no possible result. It was happily interrupted.

"Gentlemen," said a valet, who was going from one apartment to another, calling together the scattered guests, "it will be commenced in a moment. Madame la marquise takes the liberty of recommending attention and silence."

"What can it be?" said Rabaut.

But the valet had already passed on to another group of talkers.

"Something is to be read, probably," said Gebelin.

“Why should such a recommendation be given? Do they talk while reading is going on?”

“That is as it happens. If the reader belongs to the set, you might hear a pin drop; if not, they do not trouble themselves much to keep silence. Some days ago, a young author, one Bernardin, I think, read us the first part of some little romance. It was really very good; a little effeminate, but charmingly natural. The whole thing, moreover, was quite novel; for the scene was laid in the Isle of France, where our authors have never yet thought of going in search of inspiration.\* But all our company here pronounced this simplicity and nature too simple, too creole, too *natural*, in short. ‘Let the horses be put to my carriage!’ said Monsieur de Buffon, in his most grandiose tone; and the poor author, a few moments after, stopped reading. But come, gentlemen; everybody is already in the saloon.”

The saloon presented rather a singular appearance. “What is to be done?” asked some. “We do not know,” replied others. Evidently something was plotting.

## LVI.

### A YOUNG ORATOR.

And great indeed, in all respects, was the surprise which awaited the company this evening.

The hôtel de Rambouillet, although for fifty years it had ceased to exist, had left a profound impression. Its pretensions were laughed at,—and twenty houses now set up just as many.

Madame du Deffant especially continued it as well as she

\* Bernardin de St. Pierre’s “Paul and Virginia” is evidently alluded to. Tr.



could. She hastened to attempt everything which occurred to her, in order to make the succession more direct, and the resemblance greater.

One day, as she enumerated on her fingers all the reputations which had dawned beneath her roof, she remembered that no preacher had yet received in her house that baptism of fame with which Bossuet and a few others had been gratified in the old saloon of Rambouillet.

This idea tormented her. *Devotion*,—for, as we have seen, she occasionally had a slight inclination in that direction,—*devotion* joined its voice to that of vanity. After having patronized so many infidels, it would be a sort of expiation to patronize a believer, or at least a man who bore the dress and aspect of a believer.

But where was such a man to be found? He must be, at the same time, youthful enough to admit of her having the honor to form and direct him, and old enough, and particularly well enough endowed, to enable the public to take him up immediately.

“I have found him!” said the constant Pont-de-Veyle, at length. “He is a young man from Venaissin,—the son of a shoemaker. *Ne sutor ultra crepidam*, you will say. But no. I think he is the very man to disprove the proverb. Quite newly arrived in Paris, he was asked, the other day, what he came here for? ‘To look for my hat,’ was his reply. They say the cardinal de Rohan laughed very heartily. He called him his colleague in the blade. Let us water the plant, and—”

“How old is he?”

“Sixteen or seventeen.”

“Why! he is a mere child!”

“You would take him for twenty. Besides, it was just Bos-

suet's age when he made his appearance at the hôtel de Rambouillet."

"Yes; but Bossuet—Bossuet—was Bossuet."

"Bossuet himself at that age, certainly had not greater facility and confidence than this young man."

"He had more faith, probably—"

"That is not my business!"

"Profane man!"

"Bigot!"

"Hush! His name is?—"

"Maury."

"Maury.—The abbé Maury."

"But he is not yet abbé!"

"So I should suppose. I am trying how it would sound. The abbé Maury.—Cardinal Maury.—Oh yes; the name does very well. Decidedly he is the man to take up. We will do so. We must make him extemporize a sermon, shall we not?"

"A sermon! You would—"

"Why not? You know very well that Bossuet made his débüt in that way."

"Yes; but—"

"But what?"

"A sermon before these gentlemen? Before d'Holbach? Before Diderot, perhaps?"

"Without counting you."

"Yes, without counting me. An edifying audience, on my honor!"

"It will show whether the orator is a man of talent."

"I understand. If he knows how to play his part as a Christian without interfering with those who are not so, we will patronize him; if he thinks himself obliged to thunder

away at the infidels, we will say to him: 'Go in peace, my dear. Become a village curé, and God be with you!' That is the thing, is it not?"

"Exactly."

The next day, a new guest made his appearance in the saloon. This young man, with his lofty brow and fearless eyes, had in two hours become familiar with all the great lords and authors whom he found there. Whence did he come? No one from his aspect, would have imagined for an instant. Everything about him indicated at the same time the man of the people and the man of the world, the plebeian and the aristocrat, that happy mixture by which high and low are so easily attracted,—the low, because they are easily imposed upon by all greatness, and the high, because they are small in the presence of that energetic *aplomb*, which is now so rarely met with save among the people. This unknown youth was he, who for the next twenty years was to be witty in the pulpit, and sceptical in the saloons; he who was to pass his youth at the feet of Voltaire, and his old age at the feet of Napoleon; not, it is true, without having displayed during the perils of the revolution, more than one flash of real courage and real eloquence. It was Siffrein Maury, the future Cardinal Maury.

## LVII.

### MAURY'S TEXT.

He had received with joy and eagerness, the proposal of this trial, which might raise him at once to a higher position than he could have attained by six years of persevering efforts. No fear, not the slightest agitation rendered the prospect alarming.

“So you are not afraid of coming to a stand still?” his protectress inquired. “Bah! Madame, how is it possible for any one to do that?”

The whole age was in this reply. To know everything, to be able to talk about everything, had been for the last forty years the wish, the aim, the folly or the glory,—as you may decide,—of this society, of which he was to be one of the latest, but also one of the most thorough representatives.

At length an evening had been decided upon, and this was the evening.

Gebelin and Rabaut could not for a long time understand what was about to take place. The initiated continued to smile without replying. We may be permitted to suppose that discretion was not the only motive of their silence. At the hôtel de Rambouillet, in 1644, a sermon seemed only strange; at Madame du Deffant's, in 1760, a sermon was ridiculous. Few people wished to have anything to do with it.

At length, the aspect of the assembled guests denoted that the matter was no longer a secret to any one. Some laughed, some shrugged their shoulders. Some few,—the most sincere believers, and the most downright infidels, took their departure.

Great was the embarrassment of many upon being requested to name a text, in order that the orator might draw one at hazard from among the number given. The holy Scriptures at this epoch were but little known save by two classes of persons; the followers of Jansenius, who read them for their own edification, and also a little for the pleasure of disobeying the pope; and the followers of Voltaire, who studied them in order to laugh at them. “Is it not necessary,” he said once, “to know the *case* of our adversaries?” Half-way infi-

dels, worldly people, *well-bred people* in general, had nothing to do with them, and it might have been said of the holy books, as Voltaire said of Pompignon's hymns :

“ Sacred they are, since they are touched by none.”

Accordingly, throughout the saloon might be heard in a half whisper : “ A text, if you please.” “ A text !” And all the superfluous verses with which some might be acquainted, they generously bestowed upon their neighbors. “ But is this correct ?” asked some. “ Yes,—nearly so.” And from these reminiscences resulted supposed verses which would have called forth the horror of Sacy, or Martin, ancient or modern, Romanist or Protestant translators. Others, in the belief that they were quoting the Bible, boldly wrote down some of the sayings of the theophilanthropy of the day. “ Christ was the martyr of liberty.” “ Hell is the heart of the wicked.” “ God wills the happiness of all.” “ But, Monsieur,” said Rabaut to one of his neighbors, who had just written down these last words, “ that is not in the Bible.” “ It is not in the Bible ? Ah !—Well, so much the worse for the Bible.” And he threw his verse into the hat of Monsieur de Pont-de-Veyle, who was occupied in collecting the texts.

## LVIII.

### THE SERMON.

In the meantime the orator had made his appearance. The near approach of the moment had at length awakened in him a certain degree of emotion. It is certainly a great thing not to come to a stand still ; but there are plenty of people who avoid this, and are still very prosing. Could he calculate upon

having a text which would not condemn him to be prosing, in spite of all his talent and assurance? And suppose the subject should be too decidedly Christian for him reasonably to indulge in *philosophizing* upon it? And suppose—but his uncertainty was not of long duration. He plunged his hand into the hat. A profound silence reigned.

“And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory?”\*

Such were the words traced upon the paper which he had drawn from the hat. But he had perceived at a glance, all that there was embarrassing in the *why* at the close. Humility! He cared no more to preach it than the audience to hear it. Accordingly he read the first line only:—“What hast thou that thou didst not receive?” This was still humility, but humility in a form which which would allow him to say but little about it.

And in fact, he said but a few words in regard to it, in his exordium; these words moreover being merely in order to conceal his turning aside from the subject. “We owe all to God. We participate, through our faculties, in his nature, his intelligence, and all his perfections. Thence the prodigies of all kinds accomplished by human nature, in the sciences, the arts, in all the paths which Providence has opened to us.” This was the style of his commencement; an able introduction to a magnificent picture of the grandeur of human intelligence.

Viewed in this light, there was no subject in the world which could have been more suited to the taste of the age, and especially of the audience which Maury had before him. The eighteenth century doubtless thought much, accomplished much, and made many discoveries; but never was there a cen-

\* 1 Cor. iv. 7.



ture which more *naïvely* expressed its admiration for its own thoughts and deeds. It sometimes even admitted this to be the case. "It seems to me," wrote Grimm,\* "that the eighteenth century surpasses all others in the praises which it has bestowed upon itself." Ours, we must in justice admit, is more modest. Individual pride is the same; public pride, if we may so entitle it, has imposed upon itself tolerably wise limits. The more progress we make, and the more rapidly we make it, the more we feel what folly it would be to assert that we have reached the utmost limits of discovery. At that time this was believed to be the case. Superior men, inferior men, commonplace men, all took part in the long hymn sung to the glory of man; all joined in the immense circle which noisily danced around his pedestal.

Yet the youthful voice which on this day joined the deafening concert, did not lack grandeur and elevation. The only fault of this sermon, was its being called a sermon at all. The picture of the age's progress had never been delineated with greater splendor and power. The surprise of all was great, their attention was profound. In this rapid review of all that had been accomplished in the last hundred years, there was not a word, not a stroke which did not win over to the orator some one of his audience. By turns, artist, savant, author, and philosopher, he spoke to each his own language; to each one, like a sovereign scattering wide his honors, he knew how to deal forth, as he went on, whatever he thought would best suit his tastes, and his pride. He named no one, indicated no one; and yet all eyes were continually turned from him to those whose labors he was exalting. He allowed each one time to taste well his glory; and he made them all feel the

\* *Correspondence.* 25th January, 1757.

honor of entering in some degree into the splendor of the whole.

“What labors!” he cried. “What triumphs! What an immense extension of the field of our forefathers! In other days, hardly at the close of a long life, could one perceive any considerable change and progress; now, from year to year, almost from month to month, all boundaries are changed, all treasures increased. The earth has no longer any abysses, the heavens have no depths, into which the human eye does not penetrate. Hope no more, ye wandering stars, to terrify us by your caprices! Your path is marked out. We shall expect your return in future, as we expect that of the most docile of your shining companions. Four elements were bequeathed to us; we shall bequeath forty to our successors. Bring us from the ends of the earth some plant which no human eye has yet seen; we shall recognize it; we shall tell you its place in the vegetable world. Go and seek in the deepest mines, a shapeless rock, a broken bone. We will make this stone relate to you the history of the globe; we will restore life to it, and with it resuscitate before your eyes all the generations of living creatures which have preceded us in the universe.”

Thus spoke the young and brilliant sophist; thus, on the altar of the eighteenth century, he burned the incense of his glowing admiration.

He ceased. His discourse had been nearly an hour in length. He had caressed the pride, and sung the triumphs of all. Could he doubt of his success? We may add that he had taken good care not to spoil the admirable effect of this picture by a Christian peroration. Like those flatterers who conclude their eulogiums by throwing themselves on their knees and thanking God for the virtues of their idol, he had

cried: "O God, behold our age has received all this from you! You have willed that it should tower above the other ages, like the cedar of Lebanon above the surrounding groves, like the lily above the lowly plants which it surpasses in its appearance, and embalms with its fragrance! Disappear then, henceforth disappear ye clouds! The reign of intelligence is here. Humanity has once more taken wing. Let it go onward! And the Infinite itself shall bend down beneath its triumphant progress!"

Great, accordingly, was the enthusiasm; and all, even Buffon himself, pressing through the throng, went to congratulate the young orator.

## LIX.

## "WHAT SHALL I CRY?"

The next day but one, at the same hour, in a remote chamber in the archiepiscopal palace, another orator was practicing this same calling of eloquence, the noblest or the most contemptible of callings.

This orator was not just commencing his career. His débüt had been made forty years before, and yet he murmured: "Never, never have I felt as I now feel! To-morrow,—to-morrow,—at Saint-Sulpice. *All Paris will be there*, they tell me. All Paris, in fact,—all *their* Paris,—this nameless mixture of false gold, infidelity and vice. Paris,—*all Paris*. And what shall I say to these people! To-morrow,—and nothing yet ready—nothing that is worth anything."

And he pushed away several roughly-written papers, rumpled, torn, and covered with erasures and ink.

"But why," he resumed, "why have I taken it into my head to write? I was never made to write down these things,

line by line. And shall I at sixty try to learn? But come, come,—I have lost two days. This work must at least profit me a little.”

He took the leaves again.

“This exordium,—let me see.

“‘At the sight of an audience so new to me, the astonishment aroused within me is only equalled by the fear of being too far below what is apparently expected from me.’ *Me—me*,—three times *me* in one sentence. Would that happen if I were talking? But let me go on,—I will correct afterwards.

“‘What can I do, in commencing, but solicit your indulgence? Grant it to me—’ Good,—another *me*. ‘Grant it to me, my dear brethren. I am but a poor missionary. What right have I to present myself before you. Pardon—’

“Falsehood!” cried Bridaine; and this time the papers were flung to the further side of the table. “Falsehood and cowardice! And I—I could write that! I could—O God, my pen was a lying pen—like so many others! My lips could not have spoken thus,—my heart still less. And yet I wrote it,—I wrote it; and even if I should burn these leaves, I should none the less have written them. And I took hours to do it! And I only saw a few words to be corrected.—What, what could I have been about? What was I thinking of? To excuse myself! To ask pardon! ‘*What right have I to present myself before you!*’ What right?—You shall read it upon my brow, infidels!”

But suddenly a cloud seemed to pass over this brow, whereon he felt was written his right to be the minister of God. He bowed his head; he was silent. His eyes seemed endeavoring to fathom an abyss. This abyss was his own heart.

“Yes,” he resumed, “yes; I see it all. And God saw it before I did. Not alone my pen was guilty. Yes. The poor

missionary was afraid. He imagined himself appearing with his harsh voice, his clumsy gestures, and his rustic face, before those great lords and beautiful ladies. He belittled himself, oh God,—he forgot that in your sight your ministry is always exalted! Yes, I was afraid. I thought of myself,—of—pardon me, oh God!—of my reputation—of the disenchantment which might be felt upon hearing me. Misery! oh misery! Is it quite certain that I am not thinking of the same things now?"

He remained for a long time in this attitude of mournful self-examination,—his hands hanging motionless beside him, and his eyes fixed on the same spot. The passing hours were tolled solemnly and slowly from the high towers of Notre-Dame, but no sound reached his ear.

At length midnight sounded. At the first stroke Bridaine arose, as if this solemn hour had resounded differently from the others, through the long corridors of the palace. He listened; he counted—

"Midnight!" he murmured. "It is no longer to-morrow; it is to-day. A few hours more, and I shall see them,—there, crowded around my pulpit. O God!—oh God! once more, what shall I say to them?"

He fell back into his seat. But a book lay before him, upon the table from which he had swept his manuscript. Upon the worn parchment of its rough cover, might be read:

*"Vox dicentis: Clama. Et dixi: quid clamabo?"*

*"Clama; ne cesses. Quasi tuba exalta vocem tuam; et annuntia populo meo scelera eorum, et domui Jacob peccata eorum."\**

\* "And the voice said: Cry. And he said, What shall I cry?"

"Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

Isaiah xl. and lviii.

He himself had traced these words. He liked to have them before his eyes. They were his credentials as an ambassador of God ; his device as a champion of the faith, and in his moments of discouragement, his strength and consolation.

He took the book, and without opening it, held it a long time upon his knees, gazing at the terrible, but re-assuring inscription.

“ *Quid clamabo?*” he murmured. “ Yes. What shall I cry ? Alas ! Isaiah asked this before I did, Moses before Isaiah. They also trembled before they went to work. Come,—courage ! Why should he who supported them, abandon me ? Come. Where is my text ? Let me read it over once more.—And God will do the rest.”

He opened his book,—it was the Bible,—and soon placed his finger on the verse which we saw him select at the house of Gebelin, from the leaf saved from the fire.

Then, with more assurance,—he said :

“ *Quid clamabo?*” he repeated. “ This is what I shall cry ! ‘ For God hath fixed a day when he shall judge the world.’ He has *fixed* a day. Yes. That is what I shall say. *Fixed ! fixed !* There is—when ? No matter ! There is, in the course of ages, a day fixed, irrevocably fixed, when ye shall appear before God. There is a day when all your iniquities shall appear before you, inscribed—forever inscribed upon the flaming book of justice,—upon the book— But no,—they are familiar with these terrifying ideas. I wish to show them that this book is their own heart ; that it is *there* they shall one day perceive, as if by a lightning flash, all that they now accumulate there, of falsehood and vice. God will judge ; yes, but not as man judges. He will have but to restore to the wicked that internal consciousness which they have lost, and each one shall instantly become his own accuser, judge, and executioner.



*Fixed! fixed!* Do you see it, as it draws nigh, still surrounded with obscurity, but certain, inexorable, that day when you shall be plunged into the abyss? Do you see it? Oh God! Do I, myself, look closely enough at it? Do I feel vividly enough the terror with which I wish to inspire others? Have I assured myself sufficiently that you will weigh in your eternal balance my hesitations, my weaknesses, all!—even to the words which just escaped me!”

## LX.

## A PROPHEPIC VISION.

He was once more silent. He let his clasped hands fall upon the book; his brow rested upon his hands; his eyes were closed. Soon, beneath the double weight of fatigue and meditation, he fell asleep, but with that half slumber in which the soul seems to inherit the activity of the body.

And then he felt himself, as it were, transported into another world, in which revived in other forms all the false virtues, all the vices, all the crimes, against which he had inveighed in this. He recognized them from his own delineation of them. It was no longer the earth; it was not hell. These spectres were neither sad nor joyful. They advanced silently, and their gaze seemed fastened upon some object. Some brandished a hatchet, others affected to display their hands without weapons, while a concealed poignard might be detected in the graceful folds of their garments.

And these spectres came and went, like men full of business.

And Bridaine went on, on with them, like one who had something to see.

And with the sound of the footsteps of these demons, seemed to mingle a psalmody from on high.

“Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire.

“He hath smitten the kings, because the kings transgressed.

“He hath smitten the nations, because the nations transgressed.

“Sow, sow the wind, and ye shall reap the whirlwind.

“Sow, sow death, and ye shall reap death.

“He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flaming fire—”

But the spectres listened not. They went on, on unceasingly.

And those who bore the axes, brandished them more boldly.

And those who had the daggers, drew them forth.

And in the midst of the mist into which they rushed confusedly, might be perceived upon a pedestal, a tall and majestic statue.

Above its head, in starry letters, might be read,

LIBERTY ;

And upon the rock which supported it,

GOD ;

Then they threw themselves upon their knees before it, and all cried out,

“Help us, Liberty! help us! Descend! descend!”

But she remained motionless.

And then they dashed themselves against the pedestal, and all cried, “Overthrow! Overthrow!”

But the pedestal was not shaken.

Then the axes were raised, and all cried, “Break! Break!”

But the axes were blunted by the hard granite ; the name of God was illuminated by all the sparks of fire elicited by the iron from the unconquerable stone.

“ Brethren,” said one of the laborers, “ what shall we do ?”

“ What shall we do ?” they repeated.

“ Brethren,” he resumed, “ let us begin by erecting another pedestal.”

Then they set to work. Some brought materials, others builded, others set up around the statue the scaffolding by means of which they were to take it away.

And from the top of the scaffolding they cried, “ Is all ready ?”

And those below replied, “ No.” Then they ran and overthrew another throne, another altar. And they brought the fragments, and heaped them up together, so at length they raised the heap to the height of the old pedestal.

And upon the sides of the new one, to which had been given the false appearance of granite, they wrote,

HONOUR, PATRIOTISM, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY.

Then, amidst the acclamations of the crowd, the statue was taken down ; they carried it, with songs, to its new pedestal ; they set it up—

But immediately, with a terrible crash, it tottered,—crumbled,—fell. And its fragments mingled with those of which the spectres had endeavored to make it a throne.

And to the commotion of the tottering earth, replied a sighing from above :

“ Woe, woe to those who trust in man !

“ They wished to set up Liberty upon the virtues and triumphs of man. She is fallen, and great was her fall.

“ Woe, woe to those who trust in man !”

Then there was a great division among those who had accomplished this work.

Some cast away their axes and clung to the granite which they had striven to overthrow. They dashed their repentant brows against it; they kissed it devoutly.

An inner voice told these, that henceforward Liberty should have her pedestal in their hearts.

The others had shut their eyes that they might not see; and at the first sound of the voice from on high, they had stopped their ears.

These were condemned to an endless search.

And so they sought,—sought unceasingly. Their axes stirred up the fragments. Those of Liberty were shattered like the rest beneath their mad blows.

And the mist which surrounded them became thicker and thicker.

And they were heard to curse one another.

And the clash of arms followed the sound of the maledictions, and the clash of arms was succeeded by tears and cries, and the cries were followed by a fearful silence.

Then might be perceived, in the midst of the obscurity, a statue, seated. Its feet were bathed in blood. Its right hand was filled with chains; its left held an iron sceptre.

This was Despotism, seated in peace upon the ruins of all rights and all truths.

She seemed sometimes to wear a royal crown, sometimes the cap of liberty, Her tattered garments changed to purple robes, her purple robes to tattered garments. The sceptre alone remained always of iron.

And a plaintive, far-heard voice, like the voice of many nations, arose from time to time: "How long, oh Lord! how long!"

And the answer too, was heard immediately:

“Repent ye, and be converted, and your souls shall find peace.”

And the multitude hearkened not; and Bridaine repeated after the voice from on high: “Repent ye and be converted.”

And the voice said: “They have not hearkened to the voice of God, will they hearken to the voice of man?”

And Bridaine again cried aloud: “Repent ye and be converted!”

But a terrible confusion was now all that could be seen. All things changed their names. Good was called evil; evil was called good. Truth entered into the service of falsehood; falsehood into that of truth. All spoke, but none listened. All touched, but no longer perceived each other.

And all was whirling round in an infernal tempest; while Bridaine, terrified, clung to the book upon which he had supported his head.

And when at length he re-opened his eyes, he saw by the rays of his half extinguished lamp, only these words of the scorched leaf:

“God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world.”

## LXI.

### FASHIONABLE RELIGION.

Whilst the preacher watched and prayed in the archiepiscopal palace, others were watching at Saint-Sulpice; but these latter did not pray.

Many people of rank had sent their valets to pass the night in the church. This was the only way of securing places upon grand occasions; besides, it was the fashion, and that of itself would have been sufficient reason.

Fashion, which cannot fail to have its effect upon religious matters, has so much the more influence at those periods when there is least piety, and when religion is most an affair of form and decency.

This observation, which is just in itself, has not always been well applied.

It is agreed, for instance, to attribute to fashion all the piety or at least the external appearance of piety which existed in the last years of Louis XIV.'s reign.

That he may have encouraged, and if needs be, commanded, these manifestations, is true. We know very well what may be the influence of a king, more especially a king like him, whom fashion itself, the most independent of powers, was in the habit of obeying.

But we go too far in attributing to him alone all the devotion and devotees to be found in the latter part of his reign. Beneath these manifestations ordered by him, there existed besides a large amount,—we will not say of real piety,—but of pious habits,—of pious instincts which were easily aroused. We may be sure that all these people who, to please Louis XIV. performed their Easter devotions in public,—would have performed them,—in secret, perhaps, and in a somewhat confused style,—to please their wives, their children, and themselves.

We must not forget, moreover, that these externals had long outlived the old king. After all we know of the infidelity and immorality of the last century, we have some trouble in not fancying the churches empty, the priests derided, and the ceremonies of public worship turned into ridicule. This would be an entire mistake. People had ceased, it is true, to affect religious sentiments, for they would only have met with sarcasms; but external duties were generally



fulfilled as scrupulously as ever. Only the professed infidels,—and these were not numerous,—had entirely broken with the Church. Even among them there were but few who refused a reconciliation with her on their death-beds; many did not even wait until then. In the evening they laughed at the mass; in the morning they attended it. They talked impiety with immoral abbés, and theology with sincere priests. The sins committed in the company of the former, were confessed to the latter. And as for the easiest of all religious duties,—a sermon to be heard,—it was natural that this should be carefully attended to, if the preacher should be renowned as a man of talent, or of great peculiarities.

## LXII.

### A COTERIE.

This last reputation, as we have seen, belonged to Bridaine. He had been much talked of for several days. His merits and defects had doubled in the public imagination. Those who had seen him at Versailles, wished to hear him in Paris; those in Paris who wished to hear him, longed for the moment when they should see him in the pulpit.

He was to preach, as was his custom, at nightfall, and the church was full at noon. The chairs hired at five sous by the people inclined to make a business of it, were let again and again at higher and higher prices. Many who had come in order to speculate, offered theirs, glad to sell for a crown what had cost them the quarter of a livre; and more than one honest bourgeois, after having hesitated for a long time between God and Mammon, had finally allowed himself to be seduced by the louis d'or of the marquis or the banker.

The assembly contained, accordingly, to its remotest ranks, few save the great, the rich, and men of letters. Helvétius, who was unsurpassed in the art of making himself at home everywhere, had hired the whole of one of the side chapels, and gallantly did the honors of it to all the philosophers, artists, and literary men whom he could perceive among the crowd. He did not implicitly observe the order, we see, that he should wait a month or two before showing himself in public. But who obeyed in those days? A few poor wretches at farthest.

There was much conversation going on in all directions, but nowhere so much as in the said chapel. "What should we do in a church but talk,"—when *we* are Grimm, Helvétius, d'Holbach, and *tutti quanti*?\* They appeared astonished enough, moreover, to find themselves there. Upon each new arrival, it was easy to guess from their air, that the first words exchanged, invariably turned upon their mutual surprise.

"Well?"

"Well?"

"Did you take holy water, too?"

"Of course."

"And make the sign of the cross?"

"Yes."

"Very edifying."

"We must howl when others yell, my friend."

"And play the simpleton with simpletons, eh?"

"I believe there is some one in this confessional—"

"It is Maury—you remember,—the other evening—"

"Ah! good day, Monsieur Maury. I have not yet complimented you—"

\* *All the rest.*

“Monsieur—”

“But how you are established there!—Paper, pens—”

“I am going to try and write down the sermon.”

“Ah! that is not a bad idea.”

“Monsieur, I thank you a thousand times. I was horribly uncomfortable in that mob. Thanks to you I now have one of the best places.”

“I am happy to have been able to be of service to you.”

“You are used to act in that way. Who have you in that little gallery?”

“Where?”

“There—on the left.”

“I had not even seen it. I believe in fact, that some one has just entered it.”

### LXIII.

#### THE KING INCOGNITO.

And who was this some one?

About two hours before this conversation, a chariot with the arms of Richelieu had left Versailles at a rapid trot, bearing off the duke and the king.

The preparation for this enterprise had rid the king of two or three days of his habitual *ennui*. The marquise, instructed by Richelieu, had played the unconscious admirably. The king had received with evident satisfaction her compliments upon his good spirits, and these good spirits had increased from hour to hour, at the thought that he had succeeded so well in turning aside all suspicion.

As he rarely failed to pay for the few moments of gaiety he

might experience, by a still more violent return of his *ennui*, he had scarcely set out before his brow was clouded. Everything had changed its aspect to him. He had found it amusing to escape from the marquise, and now he asked himself bitterly, what sort of king he must be who found it necessary to escape thus from a woman like a schoolboy from his teacher, or a slave from his master. He had anticipated the sermon as a part of the pleasure, and now the seriousness of the thing appeared to him in all its nakedness. What was he going to Paris for? To hear threats which would terrify him, but not make him change his habits of life; warnings which could teach him nothing new in regard to the state of his soul, and would but serve, in fact, to make him still more inexcusable in the sight of God. He had for a long time past despaired of his strength; he had no longer even the resource, often lying, but at least consoling, of persuading himself that he would one day change. Such as he now was, he felt that he should appear before the face of God, an unfaithful king, a man burdened with vices, and a heart without life.

And yet this very despair, managed by such a man as Bridaine, might still become a means of salvation. The more serious, the more completely established the malady, so much the more effect is often felt from a remedy energetically applied. At Versailles, in his chapel, the word of God reached his ears like music more or less monotonous; more fitted to lull his conscience to sleep than to awaken it. There, moreover, surrounded by homage, more honored than God himself, it was but an affair of etiquette for him to hear a sermon; whether the discourse were strong or weak it was all the same to the ears of the king. At Paris, in a vast church, mingled with the multitude, recalled, by the universality of the instructions and denunciations, to a feeling of the equality of all

in the sight of God, he might yet be moved, he might return to his palace with a little more energy in his mind, a little more life in his heart.

## LXIV.

## THE CONFESSOR.—HIS ADVERSARIES.

His bad angel, in the shape of his confessor, awaited him upon the threshold of the church.

Richelieu had judged it impossible to bring the king thither incognito, without admitting the curé into the secret. The curé had offered the little retired gallery situated in the chapel in which we have seen Helvétius and his friends. It had been agreed that a priest should stand sentinel at the outside door by which they entered.

And in fact, they found a priest at this door, but this priest was Desmarêts.

“You here!” said the king.

“Sire, I may be here as well as any other. I was charged by the curé—”

“Charged,—charged—” muttered the marshal; “did he know whether it might suit the king for you to know that he was in Paris?”

“However, sire, I am ready to retire—”

The king entered without replying. A small staircase conducted him to the gallery. There was room for three; but Richelieu placed himself so that there was no seat for the confessor. Desmarêts remained standing. What cared he for the insult? He had his plan.

Concealed by the grating, the king examined the multitude with curiosity,—at first those at a distance, then those nearer,

and at last his eye rested upon those who were conversing just beneath him. He perceived immediately from their manner, that they were all acquainted with one another, and that accident could not have drawn so many of them to the same spot. He at length distinguished Helvétius, who had been at court, it may be remembered, as master of the queen's household.

"Why here we are, I believe," he said to the duke, "in the full encyclopedist conclave!"

The duke smiled.

"Ah, ha! your Majesty has discovered? I noticed it as I came in."

"And you said nothing to me of it?"

"I feared lest this vicinity might displease—"

"And you feared also, did you not, that I might think you too well acquainted with these gentlemen?"

"I do not know them all."

"No,—only the leaders and half of the subalterns. Come. Tell me the names of some of them."

"With pleasure, sire. Beside Helvétius—"

"He is just admitting some one else. Who is it? Ha! one Protestant of the memorial. They are acquainted!"

"Infidelity is the sister of heresy," said Desmarêts, gravely; "in tolerating one—"

"Beside Monsieur Helvétius," interrupted Richelieu, "is the Baron d'Holbach, then on the right, the old Baronne du Defant, attended by her Pont de-Vegle, of whom your Majesty may have heard something, and here is Monsieur d'Alembert, of the Academy of Sciences—"

"I know him," said the king, with an absent air.

Richelieu went on, but the king no longer listened to him. Like a general alarmed by the contemplation of the opposing army, what to him mattered the names of the soldiers?



Known or unknown, strong or weak, they were soldiers, this was an army, these were the waves of a sea to which God alone had the power and right to say, "thus far shalt thou go!"

A terrible army this, in truth, of which all the soldiers, one after another, might have been imprisoned without causing it to cease advancing, increasing, encroaching! With a word, the king could cause any of the men at this moment before his eyes, to be shut up for life within four walls. But he had no longer faith even in prison walls. The new ideas were in the atmosphere.

## LXV.

### THE PRIEST.

And so he became more and more dejected, as he silently contemplated these demolishers of his throne, when a great movement at length aroused him from his reverie. The hour had struck. The crowd divided before the beadle, who advanced towards the pulpit, followed by a white-haired priest.

It was he.

He ascended, and with that glance which at once imposes silence upon the farthest extremities of a crowd, he looked around the whole building; then he said, slowly and gravely, but with a voice which resounded to the farthest corners:

"At the sight of an audience so new to me, it might seem, my brethren, that I should open my lips but to ask your indulgence for a poor missionary, destitute of all the qualities which you demand from those who come to speak to you of your salvation.

"And yet I have a different feeling, and if I am humiliated, do not imagine that I yield to the pitiful meanness of vanity.

God forbid that a minister of the word should ever think it needful to excuse himself to you, for whoever you may be, you are all sinners like myself. It is in the sight of your God and mine that I feel impelled at this moment to smite upon my breast.

“I have preached the judgments of the Most High in straw-thatched temples; I have preached the rigors of penitence to the unfortunate who were destitute of bread; I have saddened the poor, the best friends of my God; I have carried terror and grief to these souls which I seemed called upon only to console. This was my duty; I performed it; woe to me, if I had dared to believe, or to allow the belief, that sin in the lowly hut is sheltered from condemnation!

“But it is here, more especially, here, where I look only upon the great, and the rich, upon bold and hardened sinners, ah! it is here that the holy word must resound with all its power; it is here that I must place before you, in this pulpit, on the one hand, death, which threatens you, and on the other, the great God who comes to judge you.

“This day, I hold your sentence in my hand. Tremble, then, before me, proud and disdainful men! The necessity of salvation, the certainty of death, the uncertainty of its terrible hour, final impenitence, the last judgment, the small number of the elect, hell,—”

“Hell—” murmured Desmarêts, close to the ear of the king.

“—and, above all, eternity—”

“Eternity!” repeated the Jesuit.

“—these are the subjects of which I mean to speak to you, and which, thank God, I feel less disposed than ever to mitigate.

“And what need have I of your approval, which would per-

haps ruin me, without benefiting you? God will rouse your emotions whilst His unworthy minister is talking to you; for I have had experience of his mercies. Then, penetrated with horror for your past iniquities, you will come and throw yourselves into my arms, with tears of compunction and repentance, and then your remorse will make you think me sufficiently eloquent."

## LXVI.

## THE KING'S MIND.

A murmur ran through the church. If the orator believed that he had touched the hearts of his audience, he was mistaken. This murmur signified, "Good! Excellent!" It was with their heads they admired; it was not that their hearts acknowledged themselves subdued. To work, poor missionary, to work! Thou hast yet accomplished nothing, nothing but a beautiful specimen of eloquence, which this young man, this budding orator, will arrange to-morrow after his own fashion, in order to deliver it, ridiculously *philosophized*, to the bravos of an infidel age.\*

Yet there was one man present in whose heart these words had left a more profound impression. This was the king.

The words eternity and hell, more especially, were the only ones which had retained the power to affect his imagination. He might close his ears and suffer them to remain unheard, but he could never hear them, that a violent shudder did not agitate him, that a reflection of the never-dying flames was not, to his terrified gaze, projected upon all around. It was from

\* It is agreed that this famous exordium, as Maury reports it, is more by himself than Bridaine.

the senses that he demanded his happiness in this world; it was from the senses that he was to expect his chastisement in the next.

His confessors had done nothing to inspire him with nobler fears. Happy to perceive that after so many means had failed there was still one to be employed, they had not troubled themselves to raise him above the cowardly terrors of the flesh. It mattered little to them whether he loved God or not, provided that he continued to fear the devil.

This, then, was the feeling of which Desmarêts had watched the progress upon his countenance, during the exordium of the sermon; this was the feeling which he had done his best to heighten, by his sinister interruptions, and his terrifying adherence to the words of the orator.

From that moment the state of the king's mind was radically false. All that Bridaine might say grand and terrible, would certainly be lowered by him to the standard of his own terrified, childish imagination. After a few more shocks, Desmarêts would try a great blow. The king would not be converted by it, but he would bow his head. God would not be satisfied, but the Jesuits would.

The thing was, as we have already said, to make the king declare himself openly in their favor. But first he must be brought to connect his own cause with theirs; he must above all be fashioned to that obedience which they wished to find in him. For a soul without energy once to have yielded, is always a reason for it to yield again.

This was the reason why Desmarêts was so anxious to crush the project of an edict favorable to the Huguenots. His hatred for them was not at this time his only, or even his chief motive. He wished that this abandonment of them should be connected in the king's mind with scruples and fears which might be made use of for another purpose.

## LXVII.

## SUPERSTITIOUS TERRORS.

If Bridaine had been disposed to aid him, he could not better have done so, for he followed with terrible accuracy the summary which he had given in his exordium.

His first division had turned upon death.

“You must die!” he said; and the very tone in which he had uttered the words, gave to this assertion, so common in itself, and almost trivial, something new and striking. It was no longer a mortal man announcing a fate which is also to be his; it was a messenger from on high pronouncing a sentence.

“You must die! How harsh is this saying to every human ear! Harsh to those who have had many enjoyments; harsh, especially to those who have sinned without enjoyment, and who have lost their time for this life as well as the next!

“You must die! And when? It is a very happy thing, it is said, that you are ignorant of this. A happy thing that you are ignorant of it? Happy, yes, in truth, happy, but only in case you think of death, think of it unceasingly, so that you may defy it to surprise and terrify you, at whatever hour it may come. But if you never think of it, if you only approach the idea when it is put directly beneath your eyes, and when we hold you fast with both hands in order to prevent you from turning away your eyes; if, even then you only carry away a vague and vain terror, oh! then is it the chief punishment of your crimes, the first link of the pitiless chain with which an avenging God is going to bind you forever, that you should be ignorant of it. To be ignorant when you are to

die! Yes, for the righteous it is a blessing, because he is prepared for death at all times, and because the emotions of a death-bed, capable of working so many marvels in an instant of time, last for him twenty, forty years, a whole life-time! But for the wicked, the impious, for all those who have forgotten or braved the anger of God, this very ignorance is but the beginning of the darkness which is to increase forever and ever around those who are not worthy of the light. Once, once only, the darkness will be torn aside for an instant. When the last moment shall arrive, when the soul shall separate from the body which has lost and degraded it, then for an instant there shall be a great light. Time which is ended, and eternity which begins, shall be at the same moment illuminated. On the one hand, a past without God; and on the other a future without God. Here remorse,—there torment. And when the criminal shall have clearly seen, well measured the past, and fully comprehended that the future is now measureless, then all will fall back again into its eternal obscurity. Then go, go, thou guilty soul,—go on,—go on forever, go on, as if thou wert seeking, but thou knowest that thou wilt find nothing. Go on, as if thou wert hoping, but thou knowest that there is no more hope for thee. The only thing that could have rendered thy wretchedness endurable, was taken from thee at the threshold. Where eternity begins there hope ends!”

Thus spoke Bridaine. Was he quite right? Ought the hell of Dante to be that of the Christian theologian? A poor Christian he, in any case, who needs, in order to rouse his soul and restrain him from committing too much evil, to be terrified by eternal torments!

But such Christians are of necessity numberless in a sensual impressible age, when men pass lightly from impiety to fanaticism, from luxury to macerations.



And accordingly the impression was great, deep, general. It even reached the chapel of Helvétius. More than one of the leaders of the infidelity of the day, felt a shudder run through him, as he said to himself: "If it should be true!"

But the king no longer said *if*. He plunged his terrified gaze, with a feverish avidity, into all the abysses which the missionary uncovered; he felt upon his brow the heat of all those flames whose image was called up by Bridaine. His head became confused; his faculties weakened by dissipation, floated in an ocean of horrors.

And Desmarêts hanging over him, fascinated him by his inexorable gaze.

And upon this motionless face, he seemed to see the smile of a demon watching the tortures of the damned.

Suddenly he threw himself back; with his convulsed hand he seized that of Desmarêts.

"Save me!" he cried. "Save me!"

But Desmarêts appeared not to hear.

"Save me!"

"Siré," said Richelieu, "calm yourself; they will near you."

"Save me!" he said, again.

"What can I do?" said Desmarêts, coldly.

"Much,—much."

"Nothing."

"Nothing—oh God! nothing!"

"Nothing, so long as—"

He stooped and whispered in the king's ear.

"This edict which you purpose making?"

"The edict?"

"Yes. Hope not to move God while you are making treaties with his enemies. This edict is already written down with

letters of fire in the book of crimes. It is there,—for eternity—”

And the penetrating voice of the missionary resounded through the gathering obscurity.

“Eternity,” he said; “eternity! Know you what eternity is? It is a shoreless ocean, a boundless desert, a fathomless abyss. It is time, but time again become motionless as before the creation. It endures,—and it does not endure. It moves on,—yet it moves not. And the damned strive in vain to measure it. And a lamentable voice is heard from hour to hour, crying—‘What time, O what time is it now!’ And the voice of another unhappy wretch groans, ‘It is eternity!’”

“Take it,” said the king, precipitately, “take it, take it. Tear it. Eternity,—oh heaven! eternity. Tear it—tear it—”

And the edict fell, torn into fragments, at the feet of the Jesuit.

The charm was broken. The king had paid his ransom. Would not the blood of the heretics lead him to heaven?

He was calmer already. All his terrors were dispersed by the magic influence of an expiation at the expense of another.

The next day, in the enchanted groves of Bellevue, he related himself to his mistress the story of the gloomy sermon.





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